

# punk planet

ISSUE 77 | JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 2007 | \$4.99

**things I  
predicted  
George W  
Bush  
would do in  
2006 but  
thankfully  
didn't**

Things Punk Rock Could (Re)  
Learn from the Open Source  
Software Movement

**songs I listened to  
non-stop that were  
released in 2006**

**recipes I learned or  
invented in 2006**

**Trends I tried so hard to resist in 2006. I failed**

**LPs I bought this year that didn't come out this year**

Events, Web Sites I'm Obsessed With  
People,  
Places,  
Records,  
Books, and  
Cultural  
Landmarks and  
Touchstones of  
2006

**live shows that  
reinvigorated my faith  
in the state of music  
and people in general**

**bands of 2006  
that most people  
will pretend they  
never liked this  
time next year, if  
they even admit to  
it now**

Listened To  
Songs of 2006,  
According to my  
Computer

**Zines found in 2006**  
concerts I missed in 2006, goddammit

NOTES FROM THE UNDERGROUND

Semi-Insightful  
and/or  
Personally  
Constructive/  
Deprecating Items  
Scrawled In/on  
Sketchbooks,  
Receipts, Napkins,  
or Scraps of Paper  
in/around 2006

**Things That  
Made 2006  
Way Better  
than 2005**

**Things Actually  
On My To-Do  
List That I Never  
Got Around To  
in 2006**

**favorite things I learned  
about myself and/or the  
world in 2006**

**Headlines of  
2006 paired  
with quotes  
from Sawyer, of  
the hit TV show  
*Lost*, that sound  
an awful lot like  
things George W  
Bush would say**

**Things I Ate in 2006**  
**things I read in 2006**

**Stupid/disturbing/offensive Sex Products of 2006**

**thrift store singles  
found in 2006  
(every one a rocker—  
well, sorta)**

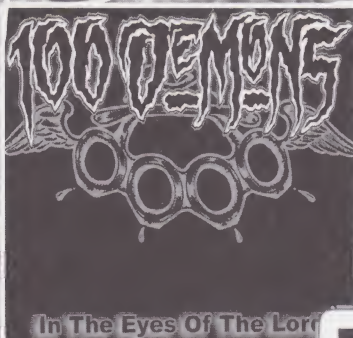
**Sugar-Filled Moments of the Year**

jokes about fashion  
and monsters  
**reasons why  
the Military  
Commissions  
Act of 2006  
is among the  
worst laws  
passed in  
American  
history**

**top 10 places to  
sniff out terrorists**







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Reprisal CD  
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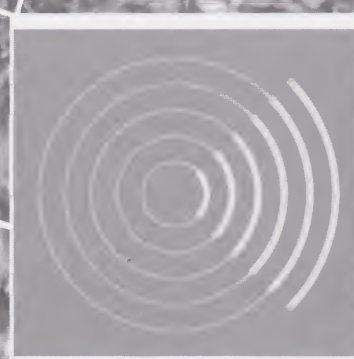
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Spanish Bombs CDEP  
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**WHOLE WHEAT BREAD**  
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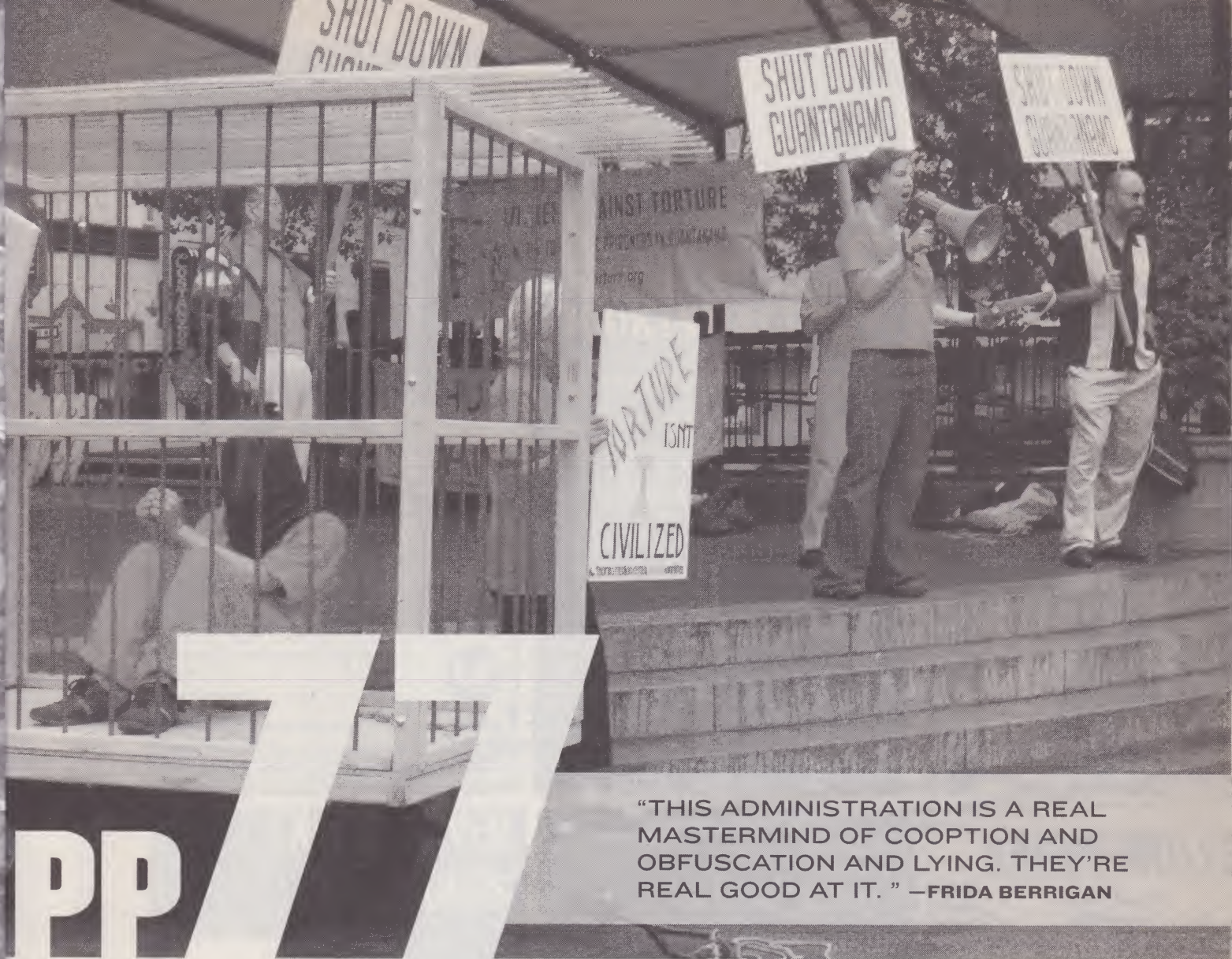


**ALESANA**  
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**LUMBERJACK MORDAM**  
Music Group  
lumberjackmordam.com





"THIS ADMINISTRATION IS A REAL MASTERMIND OF COPTION AND OBFUSCATION AND LYING. THEY'RE REAL GOOD AT IT." —FRIDA BERRIGAN

PP77

## 9 Static

Big changes for Kill Rock Stars; Writer Roy Kesey, artist Paul Butler, musician Shara Worden, and activist Gary Ruskin; And Starbucks joins the IWW.

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A group of activists created a series of images that captured the imagination of the whole world—but fair use of copyrighted images doesn't mean everyone plays fair. By Dara Greenwald.



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book reviews fleet

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2/1 Full spread	(16.25 x 10)	\$900

call for pricing/availability on inside front & back covers.

### Ads are due February 19 for PP79

Ads not reserved will get in, but you have no say as to what issue. Any ads received after deadline may run in the following issue. Those are the risks—are you the gambling type?

the risks



# intro77

It's nice, when the days get short and the many days of the calendar sprawl out behind you instead of ahead, to take a moment and reflect on the year that was. Sometimes, as November flips to December, it can feel like the time can't pass soon enough, like you're in a race to the finish in a year you're ready to see gone; other times each day marks a day closer to the end of a great year. Either way, the year ends as sure as the sun rises.

For us at *Punk Planet*, 2006 has been a hard year—hardest in the many years we've been around, actually. The protracted battle over non-payments by our main distributor that started last October took its toll as we battled a near-constant money crisis for 12 months (and while thankfully, it is finally resolved, we'll be feeling the wounds for some time). I for one will be glad to finally turn the last page in the calendar and see 2006 off, never to be repeated. It will be exciting to see where 2007, our 13<sup>th</sup> year of publishing, takes the magazine—up would be nice.

While 2006 was a hard year financially for the magazine, the dedicated and awesome staff, volunteers, writers, and designers here never let the very real uncertainties sneak onto the page. Through it all, we turned out some of the best issues in decades and for that I thank everyone involved in getting this year's six issues out.

It was a hard year outside of these offices too. The world slowly caught fire as the wars fought around the globe bled across borders. Politics in the US continued its shaky slide into neo-fascism with passage of laws condoning torture and laying waste to parts of the Constitution. And while the right wing was rocked by a deliciously vast array of scandals, it still managed to hold sway over vast tracts of the population.

It's with all that background (and a whole lot more depressing stuff as well) that I bring up how a funny thing happened on the way to our cover story this issue. When we decided to dedicate this issue to lists of Top 10s of 2006, we were expecting—in part because it's been a hard year—to get a pretty straightforward group of "10 Best" lists: 10 best records, 10 best books, 10 best people . . . Instead, as the lists started pouring in (so many, in fact, we couldn't run them all in 26 pages), they were so unique and individual, so genre-busting, and so, well, funny, that it became a pleasure just to check e-mail in the morning.

The compiled lists offer up a different view of 2006—a celebration of life, of culture, of dreams, and of the eternal resilience of an underground dedicated to innovation and resistance. As an added bonus, many of them are very, very funny.

So enjoy them—we sure did.

This issue also marks the addition of two fantastic new columnists to our ranks: Allison Wolfe and Elizabeth Crane.

Allison, I'm sure many of you are familiar with—she's been performing in bands and generally being a woman about the scene for some time now, starting with Bratmobile and continuing over the years to today, as singer of the band Partyline.

Elizabeth starts her column this issue having written two amazing books, *When the Messenger is Hot* and *All This Heavenly Glory*. She's got a way with words, and I'm glad to announce that in addition to her writing in *Punk Planet*, she's also writing for Punk Planet Books—her collection of short stories *You Must Be This Happy to Enter* will be out later in 2007.

Welcome to both of them!

And welcome to you, reader, to the first issue of a very welcome new year.

## DAN

PS. Apologies to contributors Tom Kaczynski and Eugenia Williamson who inadvertently had their last names mangled in issues 75 and 76 respectively. How embarrassing!



# NEW FROM FOR DOCUMENTATION ONLY RECORDINGS



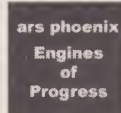
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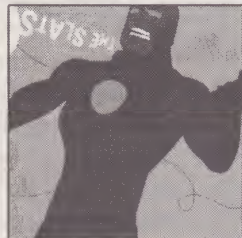


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(LF-15)



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(LF-14)



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(LF-13)

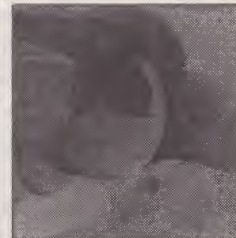


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"ONE OF THE MOST PROMISING BANDS ON CHICAGO'S THRIVING GARAGE ROCK SCENE...THE FIRST GREAT ALBUM OF 2006 FROM A LOCAL GROUP DESERVING OF A MUCH WIDER AUDIENCE." - JIM DEROGATIS, CHICAGO SUN TIMES

(LF-12)



THE GUNSHY  
"SOULS" CD

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(LF-11)



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Branch Tote



Craphound  
#6



Little Otsu  
Kaori Kasai



Extra Arm Series  
Statement



Matthew Porter  
Pirate Monkeys



NardWuar  
Getting Answers



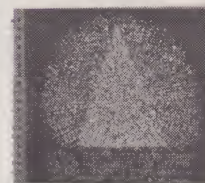
Zicmuse  
Happy Happy



Carson Ellis  
Seated Quietly



Found  
Your Stuff



Chris Duncan  
18 Months at a Time



Puckish  
Canvas Handbag



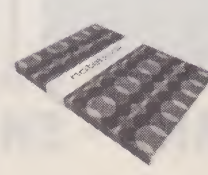
Queenbee Creations  
& Chickpea Baby



Tina  
Boobies Shirt



Nate Manny  
Animal Jam



Tenth and Grant  
Take It Down

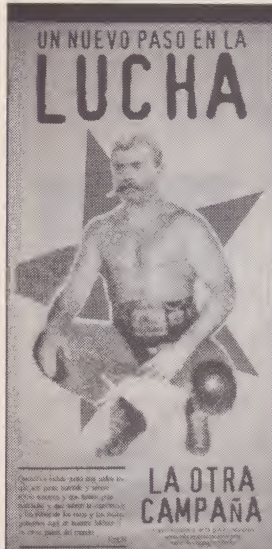


Sesame Letterpress  
Coasters

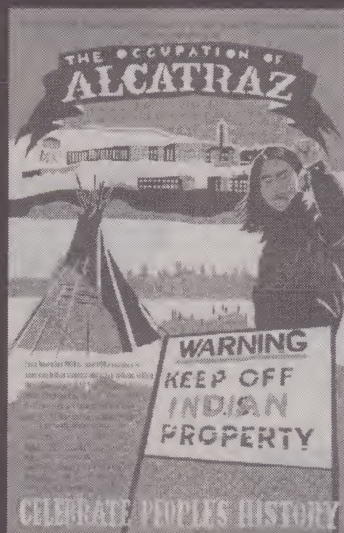


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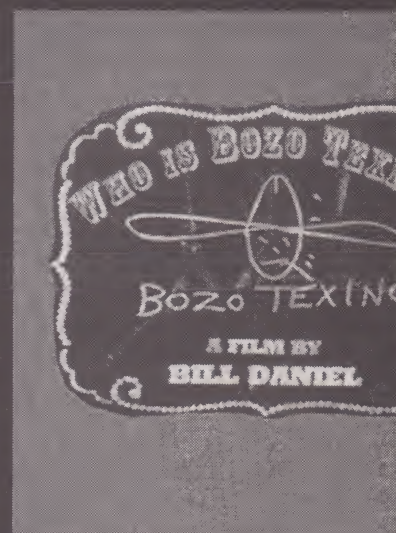
La Otra Campaña Poster, \$16



Occupation of Alcatraz Poster, \$3



Korean Peasants League Poster, \$3



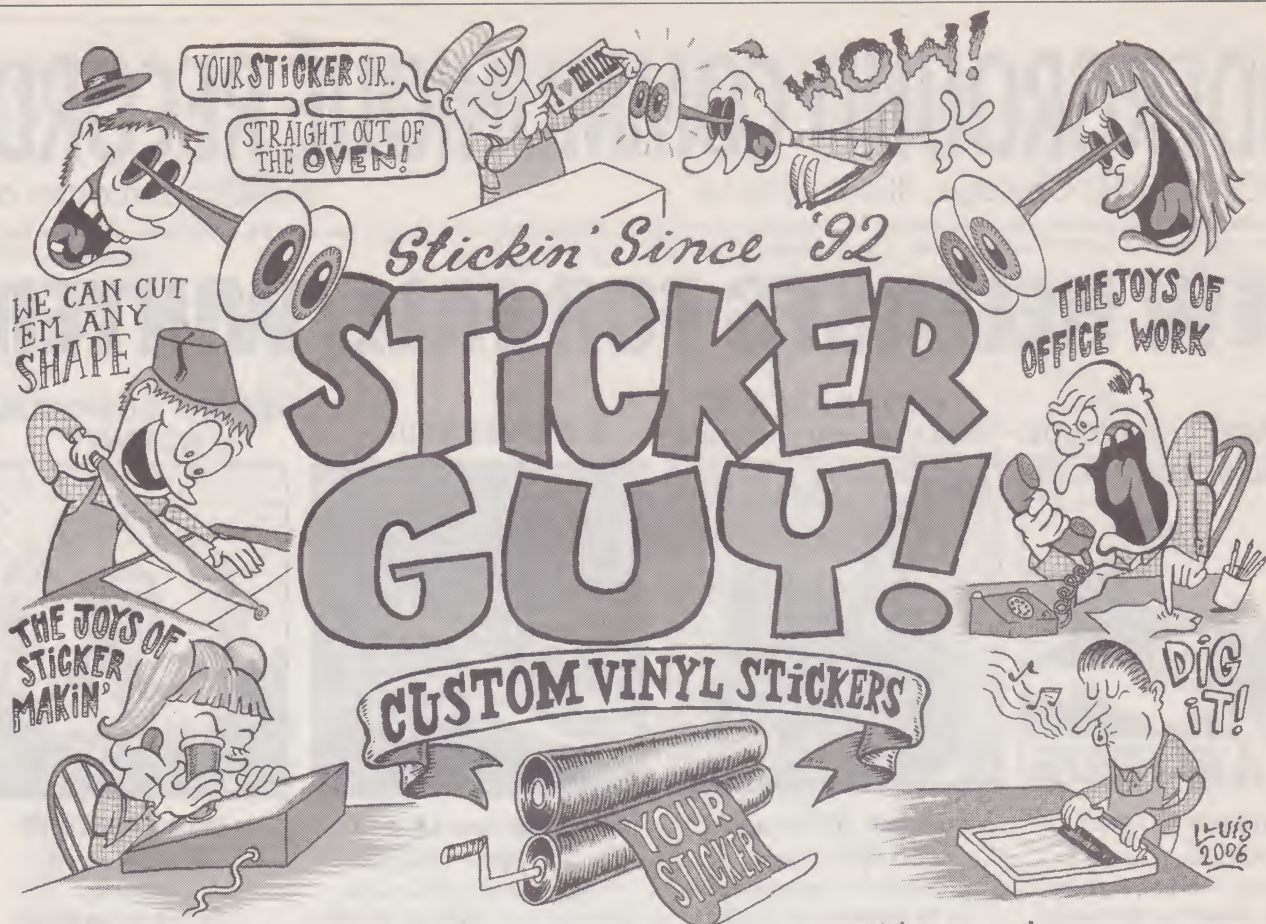
Who is Bozo Texino DVD, \$19

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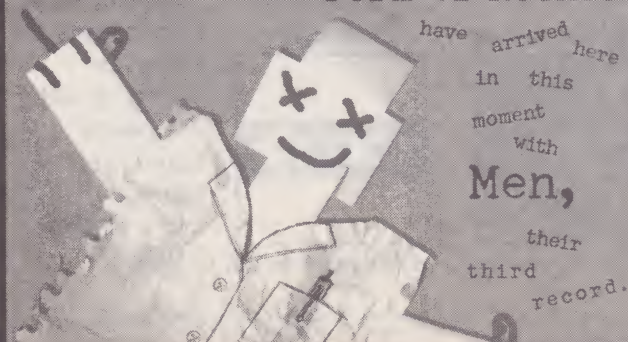
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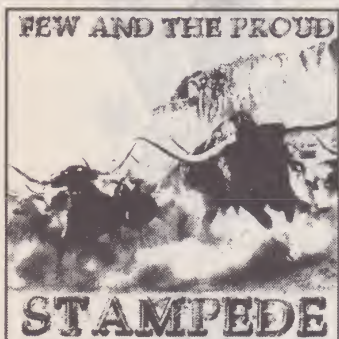
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"Our bands aren't going to take over the world, we just like what they do.  
We hope you do too."

## NEW RELEASES FOR FALL/WINTER

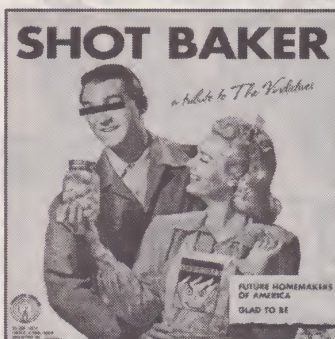
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Straight Edge Hardcore in the vein of Judge, Slapshot or Blacklisted. ex Hostage Situation, Double Crossed & Plan of Attack. CD available from Organized Crime Records. (OrganizedCrimeRecords.com)

### SHOT BAKER & VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL



**Vindictives Tribute split 7"**  
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Two Chicago bands paying tribute to the legendary Vindictives. Shot Baker is for fans of Pegboy, Avail, etc..., while Vacation Bible School is for fans of the Vandals, Guttermouth, etc... Limited to 500 copies on swirly green vinyl!

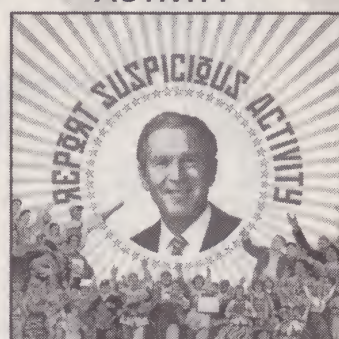
### O PIONEERS!!!



**Black Mambas LP & CD**  
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Frantic, rough around the edges guitar and drum punk rock for fans of Plan-It-X bands, Billy Bragg, old Hot Water Music and Latterman. CD version is a co-release with Team Science Records (TeamScienceRecords.com)

### REPORT SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY



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### Mexican Cheerleader



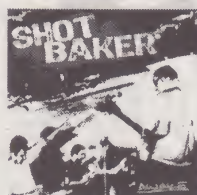
**Kings and Kings' Hoots**  
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12 song CD. ex Oblivion & Apocalypse Hoboken.

### Haunted Life



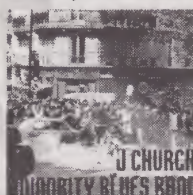
**the Dust Has Settled**  
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### Shot Baker



**Awake**  
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### J Church / Minority Blues Band



**split 7"**  
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### V/A - The World I Know

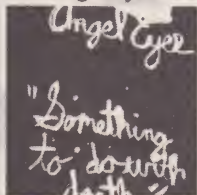


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**J Church/Hirudin split 7".**  
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### Fourth Rotor



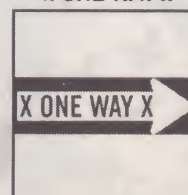
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take care,  
-justin.









## “Strings and drums—they are natural enemies”

FOR MUSICIAN SHARA WORDEN WORKS TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN CLASSICAL MUSIC AND ROCK

A year ago, Shara Worden's biggest claim to fame was singing and playing in Sufjan Stevens' band—duties that included dressing up as a cheerleader for the *Illinoise* tour. Worden, a classically trained singer from a family of musicians, has now emerged as a formidable talent in her own right. *Bring Me the Workhorse*, the debut album by her band My Brightest Diamond, is both dramatic and intimate, combining tense rhythms reminiscent of PJ Harvey with sophisticated string-quartet arrangements. After doing her sound check for a recent concert at Chicago's Riviera Theatre, where she was opening for Stevens, Worden took some time for a backstage interview.

### When did you start performing music?

I started playing piano when I was around eight. My uncle taught me. I've been performing since I was a kid.

### Would someone listening to *My Brightest Diamond* recognize you in the songs you wrote in high school?

Not at all. [*Sings.*] “Keep the flame burning and soon it will be a fire spreading through our hearts, you are my desire.” Awful. Pop ballads. Romantic torture.

spoken-word split featuring Moon and Kathleen Hanna. “The system that makes rock stars wants us to believe that we have no choices except the handful they give us,” reads the KRS mission statement, “but they don't even bother to give us good choices, just lame ones. KRS just wants to give you some good stuff to listen to that actually means something to counteract the empty and boring stuff you see on *Total Request Live* or whatever.” In contrast, Nonesuch is subsidized by media giant Time Warner.

On the one hand, Moon is taking a pretty plum post, especially because Nonesuch is creating the position just for him. It's a steady job, a shake-up from the routine in Olym-

pia, where he's been living and working for over two decades, and also a chance to diversify. At Nonesuch, Moon could woo a variety of different artists that might not necessarily be interested in a smaller label like Kill Rock Stars, and on the flipside he could offer a wider visibility to “truly punk” artists—if they want it.

Of course, there's no way to ignore the fact that his paycheck is enabled, at least in part, by some ethically yucky situations.

Predictably, there's much message-board buzz about whether or not Moon sold out but, Sabin argues, “Americans can't get up in the morning and think, ‘I'm off the grid, I'm a non-consumer.’ [In this country,] being independent is

just a different form of being a consumer.” Sure the average 12-year-old punk, picking out Melvins riffs as she mooches from her parents' pantry might not understand this, but, the argument goes, all Americans use money, somehow. So the question worth asking isn't, *should I use it?* but, *how do I?* and, *who should I do it with?*

Sabin pares it down even more: “Someone who is punk can still be a complete dick who is ripping you off. And major labels can be selling out corporate rock whores or whatever, but they can also be really genuine wonderful people who respect you and your art. You have to look at the people, too.”

The people left at Kill Rock Stars—Sabin in New

York, Maggie in Portland, Tobi in Olympia, and accountant Nard Mullan working from her home in Yelm, Washington—vow to keep the label running consistent with its roots. That'll be easy, because they grew them in the first place.

Sabin is a drummer who founded Shotclock Management (they represent the Gossip and Thao Nguyen, among others), and a co-owner of Kill Rock Stars, where she's worked in both A&R and artist management since 2001. Tobi and Maggie Vail have both been staff members for over 13 years, which is just two less than the label's entire existence.

“I'm little surprised that people think everything is changing now that Slim is



**How did you go from that to the music you're doing now?**

I wasn't one of those people that found my voice instantly. I'm interested in so many kinds of music that it's been really difficult for me to focus in on something. I go through periods where I write a lot of tunes and get to a certain point and then decide, "This isn't where I want to be." And then I go study string arranging for a year and a half.

**Which musicians influenced you?**

Jeff Buckley was probably the biggest transition. Hearing him was a really, really big turning point. I was living five years in Michigan, so I was hearing Motown, R&B, Stevie Wonder, Prince—then hearing Jeff, who was doing Benjamin Britten, Nina Simone, and Leonard Cohen with his crazy, amazing voice, burning together all these elements.

**Did you want to be an opera singer?**

I've always thought that would be part of my life. I still study classical music, privately. Whenever I'm home in New York, I have a lesson every week.

**Did you start My Brightest Diamond with the idea of merging classical and pop?**

Yeah, absolutely. It was to find out what is the potential relationship between strings and drums—they are natural enemies. The way that I resolved that was by making two records at the same

time. In *Bring Me the Workhorse*, the drums win. In the next record, I really am trying to obscure that relationship so that the strings have a more primary function.

**How was the music of your first band, Awry, different from My Brightest Diamond?**

My singing style was really different, more like an opera person who's starting to do pop music. I really don't want to sound that way.

**What did you change?**

It's called singing off the voice, where you're not singing full tones as much. It's more speaking-oriented . . . I'm trying aggressively to work on different emotional colors, so there's screaming and whispering, wailing and moaning, and laughing.

**And where does the name My Brightest Diamond come from?**

I wrote a tune called "The Brightest Diamond," that's going to be on the next record. It started out very personal, and then it became more of a metaphor. I felt like I had this person who was this really secret diamond in my closet or my pocket, and I was walking around not showing it to anyone, because no one would believe it's real. I started writing this tune about that idea. I'm bringing something from a private space and showing you something that's precious to me. —Robert Loerzel

Visit [www.mybrightestdiamond.com](http://www.mybrightestdiamond.com) for more information.

leaving," Tobi Vail says. "In actuality, the label has always been more than one person . . . I wonder if some of the backlash is because people see Slim as 'the man in charge' and he is leaving his job to be replaced by a woman." *Zing.*

Whatever the cause for trepidation by the labels' fanbase, the staff is ready to move the label forward—and to stay consistent with the ideals Moon founded it with. As this article goes to press, the revamped KRS staff has just finished its first board meeting. "We were sitting around the table," remembers Sabin, "and we realized that we're all women. In a way, it's the culmination of Slim's feminist vision." —Mairead Case

Billy Bullock and Justin Hamacher contributed to this article.

## **"We wait till we go to the United States, I'm pretty sure it's going be some kind of culinary revolution for us."**

FRENCH PUNK BAND THE HATEPINKS DON'T ACTUALLY HATE PINK

I am not planning to annoy you with the same repeated clichés about the Hatepinks over and over again, so I won't tell you about skinny ties, wavy colors, the year 1977, and testicle-cutting, skin-tight jeans. In fact, despite one damaging trip there, I have forgiven the French people entirely because of one incident in the year 2003 when the Hatepinks released their first 7" split with the Distraction. Since that day, I just cannot stop spending money on records by the Hatepinks instead of wasting it

on food. You see, it happened to me like an accident. Sehr Gut Rock'n'Roll with real-life lyrics about parasites like you and me played with a nice dominating clap on the old ass of the Angry Samoans; or to put it more simply, the musical counterpart to Zinedine Zidane in the World Cup Finals of 2006.

One thing about French people is that they do often have very funny names like Jean-Pierre, Luc, or Richard. What are your names and in what way are they

**connected with the instruments you play?**

Our real names are: Olivier, Rémi, Nasser, and Hugges. I don't think these are funny names. Rémi turned his name into Remi der Pinkbeat. He is the drummer, Olivier Gasoil, singer, no connection. Colonel Nass Le Pink, no connection with his bass, and Huggie Von Pinkbird, guitar, no connection with the instrument.

When I was in the south of France once with a friend of mine, we did plan to eat some fine French food but all we got was old baguette and expensive beer. How can we do better next time and is wine better than beer?

Yes, wine is better than beer, that's for sure. Try some Turk-



## Iceberg Town BY JOE MENO AND NICK BUTCHER

After the sad results of the most recent election, many of us fled north. But the great continent could not bear the immense strain; a unnoticeable yet glacier-sized city drifted off into the ocean and the small strange world of Iceberg town was born then.



We were looking at the shapes of clouds the other day and saying what they reminded us of: "there's a sparrow," I said. "There's a cage," said Elise.



Just then we noticed an enormous black cloud hanging above us, gathering in the sky like a fearsome ghost.



We stared up at it for a while and then noticed a second cloud, even larger, even more black: this one looked like a pair of fangs.

ish Donner Kebab and add some Camembert, it's the best French food you can get. We wait till we go to the United States, I'm pretty sure it's going to be some kind of culinary revolution for us. We heard they eat fried fat.

Tell me about the band and about your hate for the color pink.

We formed the Hatepinks right after the end of my band, the Gasolheads. It was three years ago. We don't really hate pink. It's just a bad decision to have taken this name. Some dumb people in a German squat even asked us if our name was homophobic.

For sure you know that the French are the biggest enemy of the United States after Al-Qaeda, because of that they

decided to change the name of French fries to "freedom fries." What will you do to get back your fries and to increase sales?

Whaaaaat? I think you ask the right question to the wrong person.

How about the importance of the word Motherfuquer for the French

language and maybe do you know a reason why no one is saying Pafuquer?

I don't know why nobody says Pafuquer . . . Are you trying to make a fool out of me? I feel this interview is going nowhere.

—Dirk Klotzbach

Read more at <http://hatepinks.free.fr> This piece originally appeared in Sunday Stripper Zine (Germany) in April 2006.

## Activists Under Attack

COMMERCIAL ALERT'S CHANNEL ONE CHARGES SET OFF DISGRACED LOBBYIST JACK ABRAMOFF

**G**ary Ruskin, Executive Director of Commercial Alert—a nonprofit organization founded by Ralph Nader in 1998 to keep the commercial culture within its proper sphere—has made it his life's work to prevent companies from exploiting the higher

values of education, community, and democracy. One of his major campaigns has been to stop what he calls the "in-school marketing program" known as Primedia Inc.'s Channel One Network, which broadcasts two minutes of advertising and 10 minutes

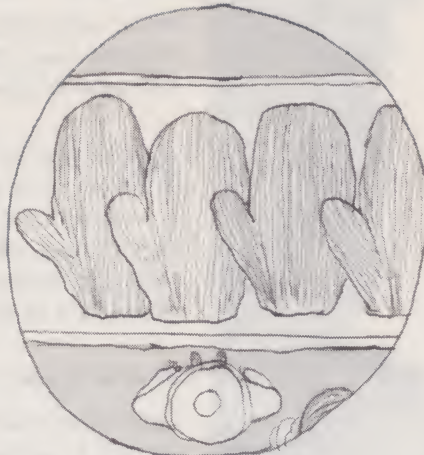
of "content" to approximately 7.7 million young people in schools across the US. Despite Commercial Alert's various efforts against the network, including a 2001 letter-writing initiative by a coalition comprised of both conservative and progressive organizations (eg, the American Family Association, the United Methodist Church, Focus on the Family, and *Mothering* magazine), as well as a more recent Schools Not Shopping Malls awareness campaign, Ruskin says that his Channel One-related work has received less media attention than other efforts.

"I think of all the public interest issues that I've worked on my entire life—hundreds and hundreds of issues—the one that's gotten the least amount of news coverage, compared to my





We followed the black clouds in the sky to the other side of town where a factory had been built. We peeked inside and saw a conveyor belt with hundreds and hundreds of pairs of mittens.



The mittens were enormous. They were awful and kind of ridiculous-looking but I guess to some one they might seem fashionable.



When we got back to town, it was too late. Everywhere there were billboards for the new mittens. And everyone was already wearing them. The next day, Elise had a pair on. She looked at me and said, "So what? Big deal." I think I liked her more than ever.

other work, is Channel One," Ruskin tells *Punk Planet*. "I don't know why. I really don't."

So it was with a great deal of shock that Ruskin recently read in the news just how much some of Channel One's chief supporters feared his campaign, and how notoriously corrupt lobbyist Jack Abramoff had targeted Ruskin in particular. An October 2006 report by the Senate finance committee investigating Abramoff's use of tax-exempt organizations includes a set of e-mails that zero in on Ruskin. The report (which can be read in full online) contains an e-mail from Abramoff's colleague Dennis Stephens to Chad Cowan (CCd to Jack Abramoff):

"Have you ever guys ever looked into Gary Ruskin, a Nader protege who runs Commercial Alert (which is attacking

Channel One, our client) . . . The guy is a weasel," the e-mail states.

Amy Berger, another Abramoff colleague, replies: "Jeff [Ballabon, VP of Channel One] just raised this with me. He said, why aren't you guys doing more on Ruskin? Please move ahead with this!"

The report details other ways Abramoff worked on behalf of Channel One, arguing to detractors that it offered tax savings for state and federal governments. In an e-mail to Grover Norquist, founder of Americans for Tax Reform, he wrote: "Arianna Huffington has now joined Ralph Nader and George Miller in attacking Channel One . . . We want to write an op-ed which smacks her big time, and also swipes at Nader's guy and the other loo-

nies on this . . ." Abramoff then paid Norquist to publish an op-ed in the *Washington Times*, titled "Tuning in to Channel One," which "smacked" and "swiped" at the ever-growing coalition opposing Channel One.

Although Ruskin had no idea that such personally attacking e-mail exchanges were taking place, he has long been aware of the forces of big money and corrupt politics that threaten campaigns like Schools Not Shopping Malls. "I also work on the Congressional Accountability Project, so I've watched Abramoff work for a long time and seen his ability to fund his ideological allies," says Ruskin. "They were powerful folks, and some of them still are."

Even so, Commercial Alert continues, undeterred, to encourage citizens to resist

the infiltration of advertisements in our schools. In the case of Channel One, even before this Senate finance committee report appeared, the company was already losing funding and viewership. According to Ruskin, "Channel One is in rough shape. They've always been heavily dependent on their lobbyists to stay in schools. This year, three of their lobbyists have pled guilty to corruption in the Abramoff scandal. They're losing viewers and they're losing ad revenue."

Yet the effort to keep schools ad-free zones is ongoing, and activists like Ruskin urge us to tune in. "Help us to keep fighting for a world where children are more important than corporate profits," he says. —Laura Pearson

Check out: [www.commercialalert.org](http://www.commercialalert.org).





## “I didn’t realize I was doing performance and installation work—all the things I hate.”

PAUL BUTLER’S ROVING COLLAGE PARTIES AND ONLINE GALLERY PROVE WINNIPEG’S AN ART CENTER AFTER ALL

**H**e sits down at the table with a wry smile. Keeping eye contact, Paul Butler slowly unzips his sweater. With both hands, he rips it open to reveal his chest. His T-shirt says: Winnipeg. Butler makes collages, helps Winnipeg artists show their work at his gallery, and never stops traveling the world as a host to his collage parties. He makes art that truly takes a life of its own. All this and Paul Butler is still a really nice guy.

**When did you get into making collages?**

I partied my whole way through ACA [Alberta College of Art and Design]. I was the head of the fundraising department, and we’d have crazy karaoke parties. To advertise these karaoke parties, I made collage posters and put them up around campus. But my collage posters got stolen. My profs suggest I explore collage after my posters were stolen, and why they were stolen. They thought it was interesting they were so popular, and that I should explore collage because of that.

## “Humor’s always been around to serve as psychic armor.”

ROY KESEY, WRITER, IS MORE THAN JUST A PERUVIAN DIPLOMAT’S HUSBAND

**S**eemingly apropos of nothing, Roy Kesey’s novella *Nothing In The World* has a lovely painting of a pear on the cover. *Nothing* depicts in deceptively simple but gorgeous prose the transformation of a young Croatian from school-boy to war hero. A pear figures in. Published by the independent Bullfight Media, Kesey submitted the book as part of a contest and modestly claims that “the judge was kind enough to find it worthy.” Kesey’s dispatches, on the McSweeney’s website, “From an American Guy Married to a Peruvian Diplomat Living in China” are worth checking out to get an idea of his very specific

existence as such, but also for his unique sense of humor, which is more subtle in the novella than in the dispatches, because, you know, it’s about war. He’s also an accomplished short story writer, having published in numerous journals including *Other Voices*, *The Iowa Review*, and *The Land-Grant College Review*, but not, as he points out elsewhere, *Tin House*, *The Paris Review* and quite a few others, to which he says “Attention All Editors Who Are Dying To Get Their Magazines On This List: *I cannot be bought*. I can, however, be rented by the hour, the half-hour, or the 15-minute period. Have your people

contact my people, preferably via electro-chemical telegraph, because those were cool.”

**I understand you spent some time in Croatia during the war and wonder how your experiences might have shaped the story and the feeling of this book. Although the book is set in recent history, you somehow created a timeless world, with few references to modern things—so much so that when they did come up it was almost startling to see the words “Toyota” and “radio” on the same page.**

I was in Croatia in the summers of 1990, ‘92 and ‘93. One of the interesting things about places like Croatia in the early ‘90s was seeing, say, a farmer plowing his field not with a tractor but with an ac-

tual horse pulling an actual plow. . . and then hearing a little electronic tweedle, and watching the farmer pull out his cell phone. ¶ Of course, in fiction that kind of thing can easily turn into a useless sort of us vs. them exoticism unless it’s pointed somewhere interesting. So I was thinking about that, and also about possible ways to bring the now-ness, the this-could-happen-again-any-dayness of the war into focus, and at some point I hit on the idea of using a diction and a pace that drops the reader into what is basically a medieval, distant world for long stretches at a time, and then letting a word like “Toyota” strike from nowhere, bringing the reader back to right-this-minute. I guess I’ve always been interested in how



**How did you come up with the idea of the collage party?**

In 1998, right after I graduated, I sat down to my new studio and I said to myself: "Well, I got my sharpened pencils and I'm all ready to go . . . wait a second—I'm bored and lonely." I started the collage parties after I graduated and got a massive studio with mostly musicians, and we ended up having a lot of floor parties. I realized I had tons of leftover magazines; my whole bedroom in my parent's basement was covered in *GQ*, *Details*, *Rolling Stone*, *Circus*, *Kerrang*, and so I wanted to do something with them.

**What's it like partying in Winnipeg?**

Back then we'd make a big tape ball, and play drunken, aggressive soccer. We'd get carpet burns and play loud music on Princess Street. Even though all this was happening while making collages, I still didn't recognize it as a Collage Party. I did a few more and a friend of mine was taking a curatorial class at Goldsmith College in London, England and for their end of year party they invited me to have a Collage Party at the school. That's when my grant council said: "Recognize this is a part of your practice." I didn't realize I was doing performance and installation work—all the things I hate. I was the last one to recognize it.

**How have your collage parties evolved?**

It's an activity people can participate in because it's a reactionary thing—cutting up mass media. I mostly play host, although it's my stu-

dio too. The only time I get to make artwork is actually at the Collage Parties. But I don't get to participate anymore. Now they're invitational and curated for a decent amount of time, five days for example, of public and private Collage Parties. It's exclusionary because I don't want artists to feel like they're in a zoo being watched by the public.

**You started an online exhibition space called the Other Gallery. How did that come about?**

The Other Gallery was a show before it was a website. I was living in Winnipeg but showing in Toronto because I thought and accepted that Winnipeg was a blue-collar town and that they don't buy art here. I wanted to prove it wouldn't work, because then it would be against what my dad said. I don't really direct the gallery, I let it evolve. I go to the viewers because people won't come to Winnipeg.

**William Zimmer from the *New York Times* said your work's success "proves the value of a simple idea." Why do you favor simplicity?**

It's simpler and slower in Winnipeg—big skies and long winters. There's less entertainment and attraction. Everyone has a long, simple work ethic. We develop studio practice because there's *nothing to do* in the winter. We make art for ourselves and each other. Not making it to fit into some slice of art real estate. I believe that art should be simple because it's the best way to communicate to the wide spectrum of people. —Nadja Sayej

Find the Other Gallery online at [www.othergallery.com](http://www.othergallery.com).

re-contexted words can have uncommon power, and how we can use that power.

I heard Martin Amis say something in an interview recently that seemed extremely relevant to this story. He said, "It's a secret no longer well-kept that killing is an absolutely joyous experience, especially to the powerless . . . Don't underestimate what an intense pleasure this is for people who feel themselves oppressed."

Wow. Jagged, isn't it. And it folds in really well with Canetti's observations in *Crowds and Power* about the command as the source of all evil, and the "stings," as he calls them, that accumulate in us each time we are given a command we cannot or dare not disobey, and how those stings are almost

impossible to extract, and keep pumping their venom in until we are for all intents and purposes pathological . . . and then suddenly we are given a bit of power by some political or military leader—often, it seems, at least in modern times, by a psychotically nationalistic one with a thing for slaughter. And he hands us smart bombs, or a Mauser, or a machete, and oh how free we feel when we are set loose.

Life as the husband of a Peruvian diplomat has landed you in several interesting locations around the world. How do you make a home somewhere when you know there's an end in sight?

Beijing is our first post abroad, the first place I've lived specifically because of my wife's job. All the other

meandering was on my own dime. The end, well, yes, it's always in sight, but five years is a long time—long enough to forget about the end most days. The idea of spending my life in many places—in chunks of time long enough to get a decent job and dig into the local soil to a certain depth, but short enough not to get bored—is something I chose 20 years ago. It's just the way I like my apples sliced, I guess.

Although no one would call this book a laugh-riot, I found myself chuckling more than a few times and wondered how you were able to balance a subtle humor with such a serious subject.

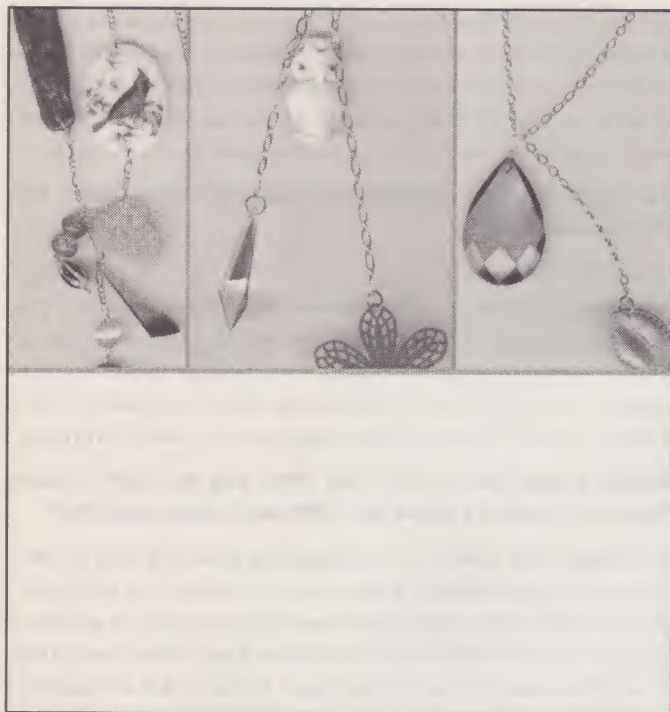
Well, humor's always been around to serve as psychic

armor, of course, and lots of writers have tapped into that before me—I love the things Tim O'Brien did with it in *The Things They Carried*, for example. And it has relevance, I think, at all levels—for the writer, the reader, the characters. Humor is all about unexpected disjunction, and there's nothing more disjunctive than war. There were days in Croatia when there was a funeral in the morning and a birthday party at night, with more or less the same people at both. And those birthday parties were not quiet or somber affairs—they were great grinding orgies of very drunk laughter. That laughter was not wholly sane. But it felt really, really good.

—Elizabeth Crane

Read the dispatches—[www.mcsweneys.net/links/keseydispatches](http://www.mcsweneys.net/links/keseydispatches)—or go on and buy the book at [Nothingintheworld.com](http://Nothingintheworld.com).





## “Back in the day, she was selling stuff at flea markets, like Michael Jackson buttons and eel skin wallets.”

CHICAGO'S NICELENA—AKA LENA KIM—FIRST LEARNED THE CRAFT OF DIY BUSINESS FROM HER MOM

In this arts-and-craftsy age, it seems that everyone possesses some kind of DIY (or DIH: Do it Herself) talent: crocheting wrist-warmers, batiking paper, making bookshelves out of bottle caps, coming up with creative ways to not pay parking tickets, etc. But few people have as crafty a background—not to mention as active an imagination—as Chicago-based designer Lena Kim.

Growing up in Korea, Kim entertained herself with ambitious projects like crushing red flowers into dye to make fingernail polish or affixing a lawn mower engine to a mini bike found in the trash. Later she moved on to painting and jewelry making, eventually transforming her skills into a successful business called niceLena.

Now her nice items—ranging from earrings (made of variously print-

## “The company is finding it more difficult to uphold its artificial ‘worker friendly’ image.”

EMPLOYEES AT SEVEN STARBUCKS ACROSS THE US HAVE JOINED THE INTERNATIONAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD, BUT THE COMPANY IS SLOW TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE UNION

“Our success depends on your success,” reads the first sentence of the Starbucks career info brochure. The company’s management refers to all of its employees as “partners.” Starbucks boasts comprehensive health care coverage, a retirement plan, a discount stock purchase plan—even domestic partner benefits and an adoption assistance program. Yet since May of 2004, a growing group of Starbucks employees has been working to organize the com-

pany under the global labor union Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), holding that Starbucks’ starvation wages and lack of employee security make it as bad as—or worse than—any big multinational. Efforts have escalated rapidly in the last few months: at the end of August, workers at a Chicago Starbucks shop declared membership in the IWW Starbucks Workers Union (SWU), making it the seventh unionized Starbucks in the United States, and unionized shops in New York

have amped up demands to improve employee conditions.

Why are these “partners” stirring up such a fuss? Well, partners or not, Starbucks baristas are pulling in a poverty wage—starting at \$6–8 an hour, depending on location. And despite the company’s sparkling image, most Starbucks employees never receive any of the promised benefits, explains former Starbucks employee Daniel Gross, who was recently fired for his efforts to unionize workers in New York over the past three years.

“Every single Starbucks barista is part-time,” Gross says. “Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz pioneered the 100-percent part-time model.” Since workers are never granted full-time status or guaranteed a number of hours, many do not make

the 250-hour-per-quarter cutoff necessary to purchase insurance. Of those that do qualify, many don’t buy: with such a meager paycheck, most baristas don’t have enough money left over after shelling out for rent and food.

“Despite anointing itself as a leader in health care, Starbucks insures a lower percentage of employees than Wal-Mart, which is rightly condemned for its insurance policies,” Gross says. “Starbucks workers came together to get affordable health care.”

Additionally, union organizers complain that Starbucks understaffs its shops, putting undue strain on its employees and leading to health problems; employees suffer from an unusually high rate of carpal tunnel syndrome and repetitive stress injuries.

The latest unionized



ed paper, fused onto patina metal shapes, and layered with glaze) to decorative pins, necklaces, bracelets, and cuffs—are available at a number of boutiques and craft fairs around the US, as well as online at niceLena.com. I spoke with the energetic Ms. Kim about her artistic beginnings, eel skin wallets, and future DIY endeavors.

#### How did you get your start as an artist, designer, and crafter?

I always wanted to be a part of the art world, as far back as I can remember, but that's not saying a lot, 'cause I have a horrible memory! But probably since age six. I grew up poor in Korea and all we had was rice and cabbage. I used to cut out people from magazines and draw clothes for them to make paper dolls. I grew up without much, so I really had to be creative.

#### Did you always intend to have your own business?

It's always been my dream to support myself through the arts. My mom is an entrepreneur and runs her own business. Back in the day, she was selling stuff at flea markets, like Michael Jackson buttons and eel skin wallets. She had a hot-dog stand once too. So I got my selling side from her. Wanna buy some meat?

#### What sorts of tasks are involved in starting and maintaining a DIY business like niceLena?

Starbucks, a shop in Chicago's Logan Square, has made worker safety a particular focus of its campaign. In a pointed-yet-subtle direct action several months ago, Logan Square baristas bought a stepladder—an item for which they'd asked the management repeatedly over the past few years—and branded it with a sticker reading, "Brought to you by IWW Starbucks Workers Union for a safer, healthier workplace." Within an hour of workers placing the IWW ladder in the store, management bought them a similar stepladder to replace it—a purchase they'd long refused to make.

Through creative actions like this one, organizers at the seven unionized Starbucks have attained higher wages and greater job security, addressed religious discrimination complaints, and convinced

management to clear up a rat infestation at a New York shop. In mid-October, starting pay for baristas was upped from \$7.50 to \$7.80 in Chicago. After six months and a favorable performance review, Chicago baristas will now make \$8.58 per hour, and their New York counterparts will make \$9.63. Though company higher-ups have instructed store-level management to tell workers the raises are *not* due to union activity, organizers count them as a triumph—and a sign that things are changing. Joe Tessone, a lead SWU organizer in Chicago, says that after his first six months, he was "insulted with a 15-cent raise." Now that kind of behind-closed-doors stinginess won't fly.

Yet it's not all sunshine and victory for the union-pioneering baristas. Workers have

been fired, bribed, coerced, and spied on because of their union involvement, Gross says. And as of yet, the Starbucks corporation hasn't officially acknowledged the IWW union. The company may come around soon though, says Tessone.

"If Starbucks is smart, it will recognize the union," he says. "They are making a big mistake by attempting to fool the public and deny our existence while at the same time maintaining a fierce anti-union campaign on the inside. The world is watching this unfold and the company is finding it more difficult to uphold its artificial 'worker friendly' image."

In addition to engaging in direct action on their home turf, members of the IWW Starbucks Workers Union are kicking off the Justice

#### Your pieces incorporate everything from origami prints and Korean playing cards to images of camping and clouds. What inspires your designs?

I love prints and am heavily influenced by Korean and Japanese folk art. I like using nontraditional materials and methods for jewelry making. Not to sound too high art, but I see some of my stuff as miniature paintings or collages. Korea is very mountainous, and I spent much of my childhood just playing all day in fields and forests. I like taking elements from nature and placing them in an abstract form. I enjoy imagining the customer wearing my stuff and it becoming a part of their environment.

#### Are you currently working on any other DIY projects?

I'd like to organize a group of street vendors selling handmade goods on bikes or out of popsicle carts. Everyone would have a sash, so the group would be easily recognizable. —Laura Pearson

View the bracelets, ties, and earrings—and some stuff with pictures of hot dogs!—at [www.nicelena.com](http://www.nicelena.com).

from Bean to Cup campaign, which seeks to unite baristas with another underpaid group: coffee bean farmers. College campuses make up a prime front of this campaign. Student activists across the country are demanding that their schools stop serving Starbucks coffee until the company commits to use Fair Trade coffee beans and recognize the IWW Starbucks Worker Union.

"Transnational capital requires a transnational response from labor," Gross says. "The IWW believes that workers need to organize across the Starbucks supply chain. We can let these companies rule our lives, or we can organize and fight back in a social movement. As a society, we have a choice."

—Maya Schenwar

See videos and more at [www.starbucksunion.org](http://www.starbucksunion.org).



## "The divestment movement is starting to scare the Sudanese government."

A NEW GENERATION OF STUDENT ACTIVISTS TAKES ON GENOCIDE IN THE SUDAN

On October 15, 2006, close to 200 activists gathered in downtown Chicago to take part in a "Human Chain for Darfur" demonstration on the city's crowded Michigan Avenue. The demonstration, organized by the Chicago Coalition to Save Darfur, was meant to show support for a United Nations-led military intervention in the Sudan. Participants wore blue United Nations T-shirts and carried signs calling for an end to the genocide that has killed over 400,000 civilians since February 2003.

Not surprisingly, this group of demonstrators included a wide variety of peace activists, religious leaders, and even Sudanese refugees. What was perhaps most refreshing about the make-up of these activists was the presence of many college students from such areas schools as the University of Chicago, the University of Illinois-Chicago, and DePaul University. To many such students, this attention to the current situation in Darfur—along with the belief that they can do something about these atrocities—is a perfect example of the personal meeting the political. These young people are products of

the 1990s, an era defined not only by tremendous economic growth and optimism, but also a decade marked by policies of mass execution around the globe. Today's college students came of age seeing images of death and destruction in Bosnia, Rwanda, and Kosovo, and these images clearly stuck with them, as did the United States' inability to adequately address such tragedies.

"Our failure to intervene—or our belated intervention, as in the case of Bosnia and arguably Kosovo—really left a mark on our generation," notes Dan Millenson, a sophomore at Brandeis University and President of the Sudan Divestment Task Force. It is this heightened awareness of history of contemporary genocidal moments that may help explain why today's generation of college students is particularly attuned to the suffering in the Sudan.

Students like Millenson have begun to make a tremendous impact in the struggle against genocide in the Sudan by calling upon their home institutions to divest all investments in any companies with either direct or indirect ties to the Sudanese govern-

ment. Across the country, schools including Dartmouth, Stanford, Harvard, and the University of Maryland (among others) have, under pressure from student activists, signed on to the divestment campaign. At the same time, groups like Students Taking Action Now in Darfur (STAND) and the above-mentioned Sudan Divestment Task Force have brought a level of organizational sophistication to the issue, pushing their influence beyond the confines of the ivory tower. After all, it was only after the University of California system made the decision to divest that the entire state of California followed suit. In another example of this phenomenon, Providence, Rhode Island became the first city to join the divestment campaign in the wake of the example set by Brown University.

In many ways, the campaign for divestment in the Sudan is reminiscent of the strategy that many young activists took during the 1980s to protest the apartheid regime in South Africa. Like the government of apartheid-era South Africa, the leaders of the Sudan rely heavily upon direct foreign investment to finance their repressive policies. This earlier divestment campaign drew much public attention to the horrors of apartheid in South Africa, and today's student leaders hope their push for divest-

ment yields similar results. If nothing else, contemporary student activists have had an incredible amount of success in a short period of time. During the South Africa campaign, roughly 55 colleges and universities divested over the course of more than two decades. By contrast, more than 30 colleges and universities have divested from Sudan or adopted restrictions on Sudan-linked investments in less than 18 months.

Despite encouraging trends, the relevance of student-led divestment campaigns is questionable if the genocide campaign continues. But there is evidence that the Sudanese government is beginning to feel the heat.

"The divestment movement is starting to scare the Sudanese government," notes Millenson. "In response to the divestment campaign, the Sudanese government has issued press releases condemning the divestment movement, has tried to convince activists to abandon the effort, and has taken out full-page ads in the *New York Times*. As the movement gains even more momentum over the coming months, we hope that this pressure will increase."

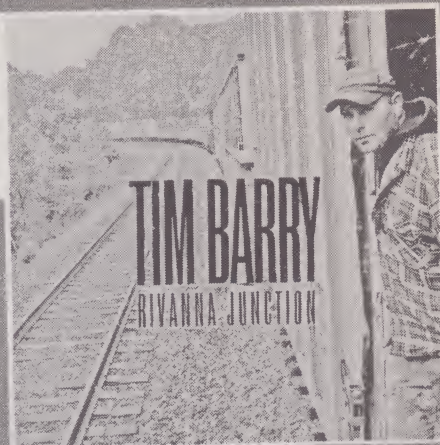
As heartbreaking images and stories continue to emerge from Darfur, one hopes that Millenson is right.

—Michael Carriere

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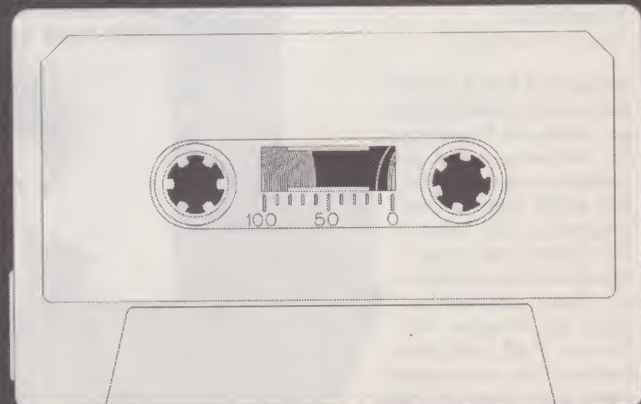
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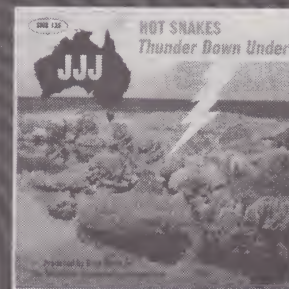
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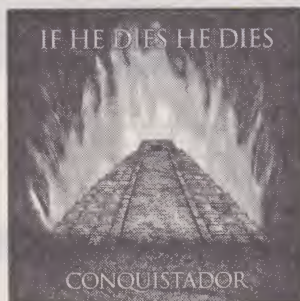
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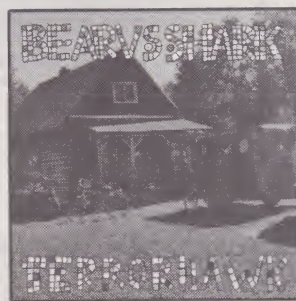
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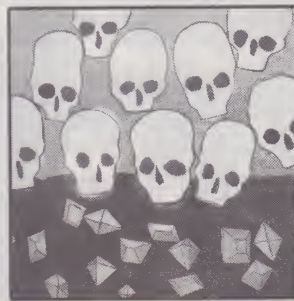
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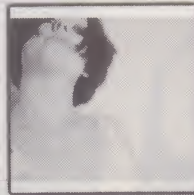
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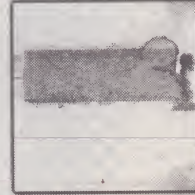
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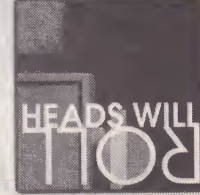
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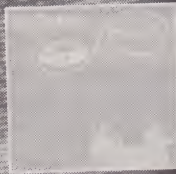
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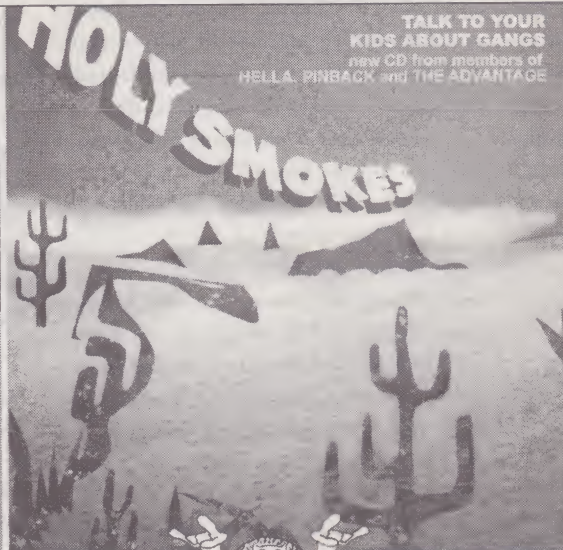
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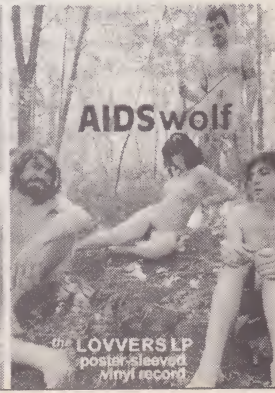
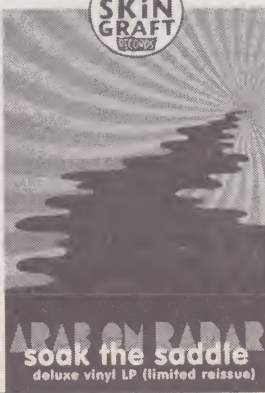
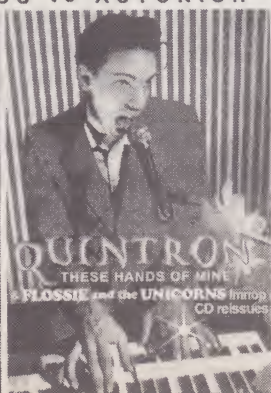
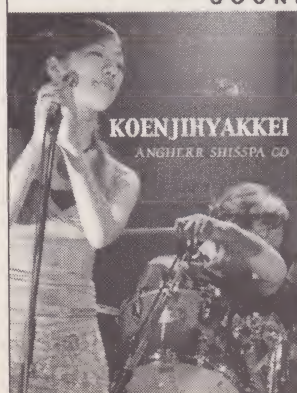
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**H**e was born only a few miles from this very spot, but Joe Lally looks out of place in this Adams Morgan cafe in Washington DC's first political ward. To describe how he got from *There to Here*, the name of his Dischord Records solo debut, would be to recount the entire history of American punk and an artistic odyssey that spans continents. Now a homeowner in Columbia Heights, the adjoining DC neighborhood, he's arrived early; donning cut-off khakis, Birkenstocks, and a sun-hat, he sped here on his aqua-colored beachcruiser for a large coffee and heavily-iced tapwater. It's a blissfully sunny and cloudless Tuesday morning, and he's got a few hours to kill before retrieving his five-year-old daughter from school.

Despite the mellow atmosphere, he appears poised but self-conscious. "It's a little quiet in here, isn't it?" he whispers, suggesting that we head into a nearby alley to talk more freely. A founding member of Fugazi, Lally is best-known as the lanky and taciturn bassist who put early treasures like "Waiting Room" ("I didn't even write that bassline") on the cultural radar.

One of four chief-architects of the "post-punk underground"—copious buzzwords notwithstanding, most Dischord material is virtually unclassifiable—it's ironic to see him placidly stirring a decaf by a shaded curbside, his demeanor more reminiscent of a young abbot fresh from morning prayer than that of an old-guard of American hardcore. Having recently completed projects with Jon Frusciante of the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Josh Klinghoffer, and ex-Frodus members Jason Hamacher and Shelby Cinca, Lally takes time out to discuss his solo work and upcoming tour with, among other musicians, the Melvins.

Interview by **Pete Cobus**

**Fugazi has been on indefinite hiatus, and in the intervening years you've cut a number of side projects in Italy, LA, and DC. So, your new solo release, *There to Here*: why now?**

As soon as Fugazi stopped—as soon as we decided to stop playing live, to stop working and allow our personal lives take over—as soon as that was announced and my future lay blank before me, words started to come. I started to visualize the music alone. For 15 or 16 years I'd understood only how to make music with three other people. Before that, I'd learned to write with a couple of others, or to play basslines

someone had shown me. Fugazi got to the point where I wasn't even sure what was going on anymore; I wasn't sure how to write the way the four of us had written together. I had been able to write on all of the records, and I even started to sing on the last couple of albums, so I knew I had it in me to sing and play songs. But when Fugazi's momentum stopped, it was like I continued moving, but I had no outlet. I wondered, "How is this going to work?" I really didn't know how to finish songs on my own. I really didn't have a deep technical understanding of music.

**So, it wasn't a lack of personal discipline that kept you from writing, but that you just weren't sure how to proceed.**

Exactly. Sometimes in my head, vocally, I could hear what sounded like full songs, but I didn't know how to write basslines for them. Sometimes the vocals would match a bassline I had already written, so I started to put them down even if I liked only a part or two, and it was like, "OK, each bassline is a song." That was my starting point. Then I took the lyrics and basslines and tried to fit them together. I tried to learn technically. I took piano lessons in LA, and to this day I can't tell you much about it. They showed me how to play a couple of songs, and how to associate the sounds: the minor sound, the major sound, etc . . . It wasn't like I learned to play piano, I still don't know. But it helped just talking to someone. The teacher wasn't able to answer all of my questions, but he conveyed what needed to; he understood that I'd been playing for a long time, and he knew about Fugazi and my situation, my dilemma. We didn't get very far because I moved again. I lived in Portland for a while after that, and, both in LA and Portland, I'd played with different people. Inevitably I played my own music with them, and then I'd just leave it and go "this is just something that I have to figure out on my own." It bothered me that it kept being there, that it kept nagging at me. When I moved back to DC, it became clear. It was like, "I'm going to find out what this is."

**The process of growth you've just described, does it speak to the title of the album, *There to Here*?**

You could say it has a lot to do with it. Like,

Fugazi could represent "There" and my solo stuff could be "Here." There's a lot of that going on, and it's in the artwork. It's throughout the record.

**You've said in previous interviews that you prefer your basslines to be "totally crucial, but totally simple." Though you performed alone last night at the Black Cat, you'll have musicians as diverse as the Melvins, Justin Moyer, Mauricio Takara, and Fernando Cappi joining you on stage throughout the fall and winter tour. Have you intentionally left these tracks structurally basic so that other performer can build around them onstage?**

They were consciously written that way. The idea was to write the core. It had to stand on its own. But also I knew that I would need to be able to stand there and play them by myself.

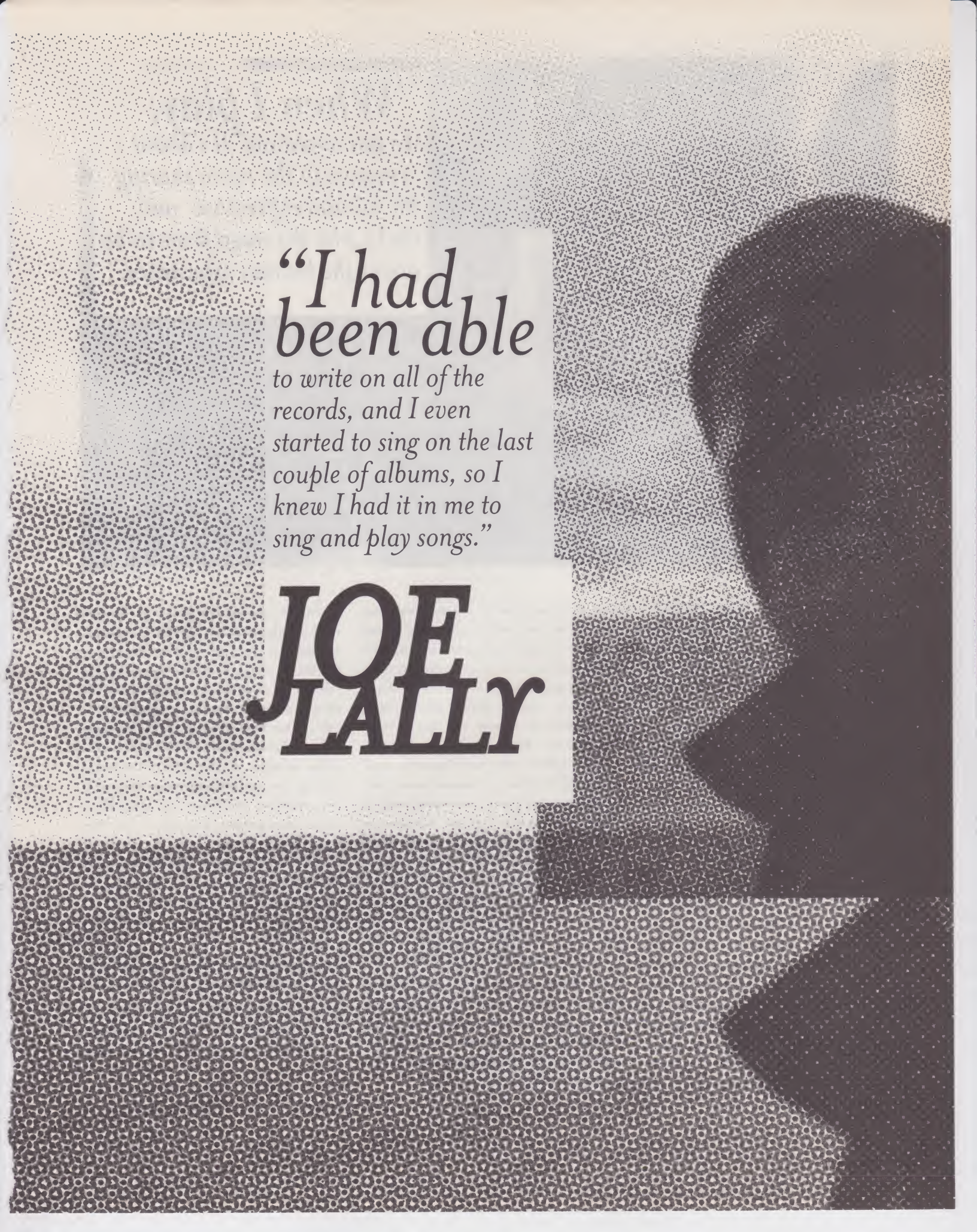
**So now that you're writing and playing on your own, what's next for you?**

I'm still working it out, and I may be pretty happy working it out for some time. The concept was to write music that people could add to, and from there it would evolve. I don't know if it needs to go beyond that. For example, when I realized that I needed a percussionist, it was because I knew that if there was just the slightest amount of percussion, just a beat, the groove would be conveyed better—the groove would translate and the songs would come across better. And that's where I got it to, and now I want other people to come in and be themselves and react to it.

**Your lyrics: some of them are about war, and, presumably, Iraq and US foreign policy. Is that accurate?**

There's always some kind of war going on, and, really, I am not writing about the specifics of a particular war. When I reference war, I'm generally talking about war as a concept—the idea that war is supposed to be an answer to something. War is a primitive answer to problems between nations that only reinforces the concept of *nation*, and reinforces these invisible lines on the earth, which has no natural lines, no borders. ¶ Our country spends enormous amounts of money on defense, while, in my opinion, there are things being overlooked. Things that are human, or, what is it? Humanist? Education, health care,



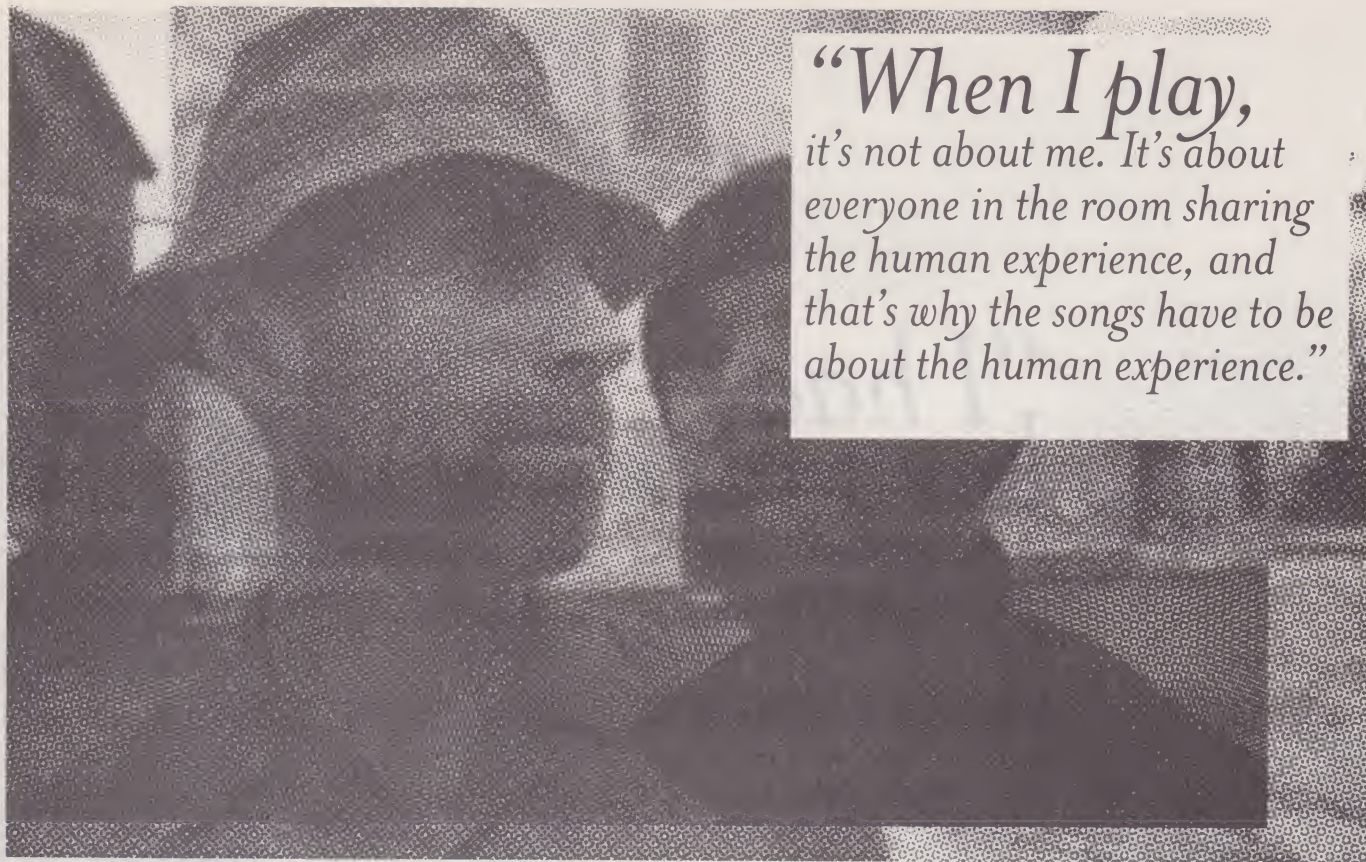


*“I had  
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couple of albums, so I  
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sing and play songs.”*

**JOE  
LALLY**





*"When I play, it's not about me. It's about everyone in the room sharing the human experience, and that's why the songs have to be about the human experience."*

retirement . . . People plead their "ists" and "isms," and they follow their political parties, but those are very, very narrow ideas by which to define people. Republican or Democrat, conservative or liberal—those words don't come close to defining anyone. Those definitions just limit the conversation. When one person speaks as a Democrat and one speaks as a Republican, and they debate something, nothing of value gets said about the most basic of human needs. And it's the same everywhere: a few people in power decide that there needs to be a war, and that there is no way around the problem without their own people killing other people. There is *this* invisible national border, and *that* invisible national border; your people embody one definition of it, those people define another. ¶ To me, it will never mean anything more than that. It all depends on how you can convince people—use the word "brainwash," even—that they need to kill each other. And coming back to Washington DC, after having been abroad for a while, it just makes it clearer: the ne-

glect of people's needs, the country going deeper into debt with no plan for any kind of future. I could just go on and on. ¶ It's tough to talk about, but you could say that I write nothing but love songs. I believe that people who want to destroy other people, deep down, are in pain and they hurt, so they lash out. Really, they want to be with other people but they can't figure out how, so perhaps they want to massacre everyone or whatever. And part of writing songs is to point things out to people because you want to help them; arguably, in that sense, you could say they're all love songs, or say that they're all political songs. It depends on how you look at it. I feel that all you can do is relate the human experience, and I don't know why that is important. Maybe because those are the songs that move me.

**It sounds like you perceive a deep failure of communication in the world, and, like other artists, the painter Chuck Close, say, you want to produce work that defies vocabulary and resonates with people who appreciate a certain kind of shared intimacy with one another.**

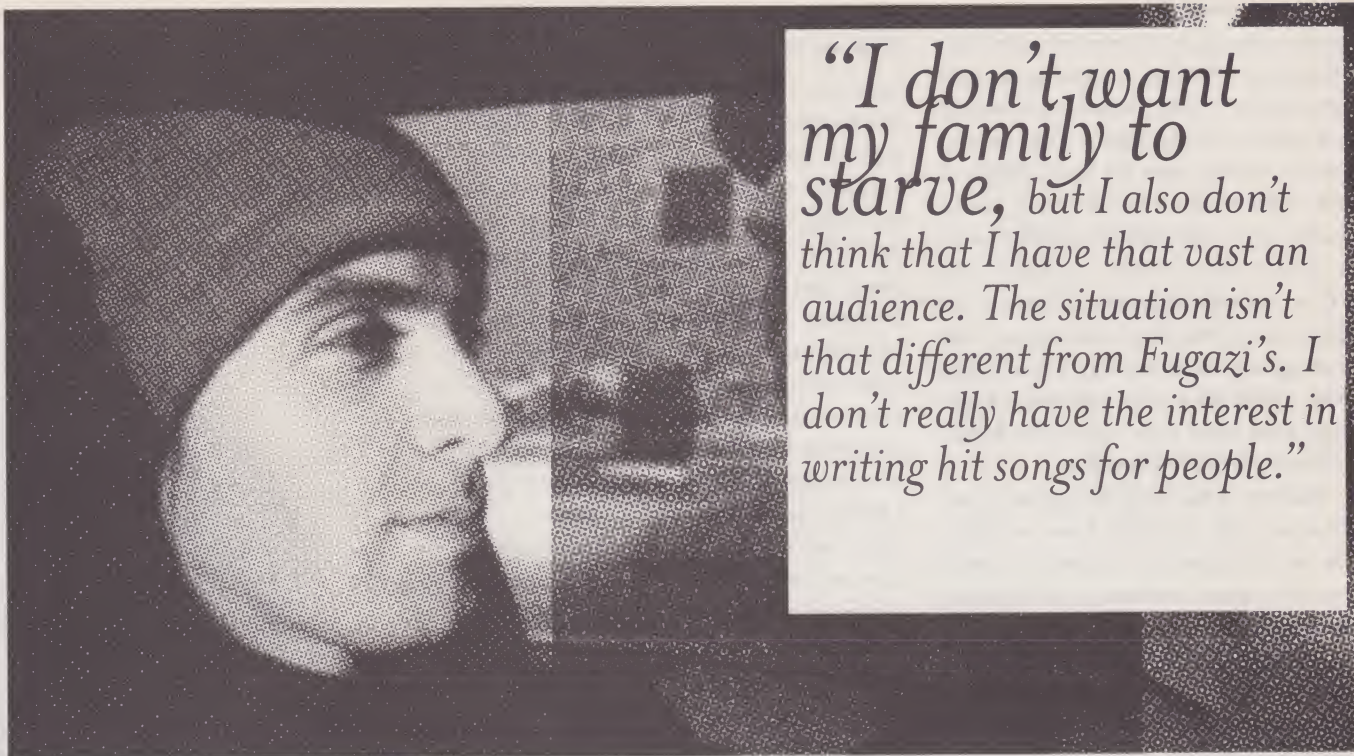
I agree totally. I just feel that it is so im-

portant to go see live music in a room with people. It doesn't matter how small or large. When I play, it's not about me. It's about everyone in the room sharing the human experience, and that's why the songs have to be *about* the human experience. They have to be about the struggle to be at peace, and to be at peace with other humans. At the time of the song, during the performance, you transcend the problem of being the misunderstood, lone person. You aren't. For that song, you're in tune with the others. It cannot be explained or defined, and to apply words might even demean [the phenomenon]. It is the thing that, if you're open to it, carries into other parts of your life.

**You mentioned Bob Dylan on stage the other night. Has he influenced to your solo work?**

How could he not? I walked away from Fugazi with only my bass and my voice, and the question hit me, "How can keep playing on my own?" How can I not see Dylan, and Neil Young and others like them? They stood all by themselves and, of





*"I don't want my family to starve, but I also don't think that I have that vast an audience. The situation isn't that different from Fugazi's. I don't really have the interest in writing hit songs for people."*

course, that's what I wanted to do. Except that I wanted to it with a bass.

**Coming from the Dischord scene, a thing so distinctly grassroots, what's your perception of the word "sellout"? What do you make of Dylan playing stadiums, and making tons of money? What about Neil Young performing on MTV? How do you see this in relation to your own music or your own experience?**

It doesn't relate to my experience. Fugazi played to as many people as we could. We never said, "No, we won't play a place that's that big." We always tried to line up a venue that would accommodate the amount of people that might come out to see us. We did with the record label what was right for us, and that doesn't mean that it can work for other bands. But, what? should I not like Otis Redding because he was signed to a major label? That has nothing to do with what he was doing. If anything, I've locked myself into something very unique in this day and age. What Fugazi did was an enormous statement. For me, to sign with Sony would be to retract that statement, and would be a sort of grotesque thing to do. I mean, I don't want my family to starve, but I also don't think that I have that vast an audience. The sit-

uation isn't that different from Fugazi's. I don't really have the interest in writing hit songs for people. Dylan started out as a songwriter, and I think he was making more dough off of publishing songs he wrote for other people to sing. Then he was encouraged to do it himself, and he eventually found himself in the position that he was in, which, apparently, if you've read *Chronicles*, wasn't such a great position to be in. He wasn't particularly thrilled with the situation he was thrust into. Frankly, it's more than I could deal with. I like being able to walk down the street without having people think that they know who I am. Because, people don't know who Bob Dylan is. They don't know him, and even I might speculate that I know him because of the time I've spent listening to his music. But I just do not know that who that guy is, and I'm sure he could care less to know me.

**You and Don Zientara spent the spring touring some smaller venues, and you had a decent turnout. You recently shared the stage at The Black Cat with Justin Moyer of Supersystem—AKA, El Guapo. What's on tap for the future tour?**

I'll be touring with the Melvins, and

it'll depend on what kind of venues they book. It'll depend on the city, but they're awesome people, and they are a great live band, so there should be quite a draw. I'll be in an opening slot, but hopefully Dale and Buzz will play behind me. The three of us won't have any chance to practice, so they will really need to learn the record. Unless they come up with their own version of the material right off the bat, which is fine with me. So long as I can do what I'm doing without being distracted. I mean, they're just so good at this kind of thing . . .

**Over the course of the upcoming tour, you'll have numerous elite musicians alongside you, and all of them will need to learn your material. That said, any chance for a post-tour studio collaboration?**

The thing I'm doing right now is so simple that I'm not interested in cluttering it up with a lot of people. I just don't hear it yet. I'm still working on presenting the most boiled-down extractions. I mean, in theory, and this is just speculation, I'd first love to work on music I make with the Melvins, maybe a Joe Lally/Melvins record. But I really don't know. We'll have to play and see what we write together. ©



I first got to know Frida Berrigan in jail. We were in Manhattan's Tombs during the 2005 Republican National Convention as part of the NYPD's 1800+ protest-related arrests (most later found to be illegal). I had been arrested by surprise when the NYPD diverted a Union Square protest onto 16th Street, penned off both ends of the block and arrested everyone inside, offering no chance to disperse. By the time I met Frida, I had spent 14 hours at the makeshift jail of Pier 57, an overcrowded, filthy bus garage with walls and floor spread thickly with oil and tar, like a mechanics shop; I subsequently spent about three hours in the Tombs, all without charge or explanation.

Needless to say, by the time a stern police-woman put Frida in my cell, I was miserable, grimy and exhausted. So I marveled to watch her work the crowd, her white clothes spotless, holding aloft her city-issued styrofoam cup of water as if it were a glass of red wine at a cocktail party. Her smile was both mischievous and reassuring as she aimed it my way, came over to me and sat down.

I soon learned that Frida had been arrested as part of a protest with the War Resisters League—a longtime nonviolent antiwar group—as had the other women all in white, few still as spotless as she. (Frida was later released after about 24 hours in the system, I after 32.)

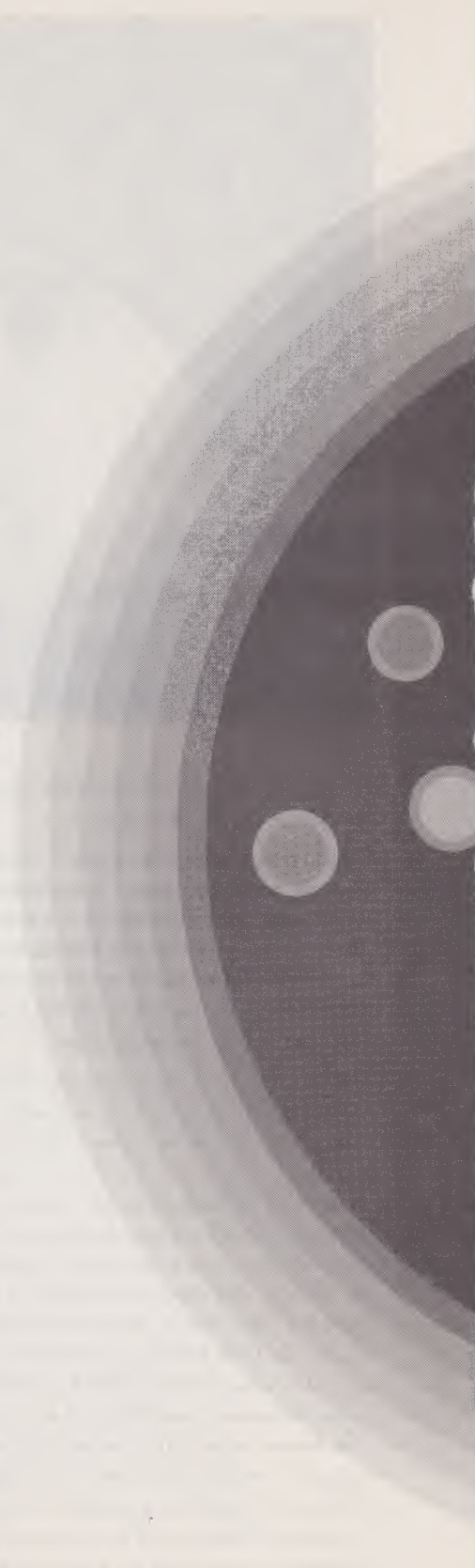
I also learned that Frida was well acquainted with the tactic of arrest as political protest. She grew up at Jonah House, a community of nonviolent antiwar activists in Baltimore, MD. Her father and uncle, Phillip and Daniel Berrigan, were veritable celebrities of civil disobedience, famous for pouring blood on draft files to remind us that “war is an outright bloody business,” as Phillip told the *Sun* magazine shortly before his death in 2002. Her mother, former nun Elizabeth McAllister, has also long shaped and impacted America's peace movement.

Frida continues this tradition today as a founding member of Witness Against Torture: A Campaign to Shut Down Guantanamo. The group began in December 2005 when Frida and 23 other US Catholics walked 60-plus miles in an attempt to visit the inmates of Guantanamo prison, praying and fasting along their journey. She is also a senior research associate at the World Policy Institute's Arms Trade Resource Center and a board member of the War Resisters League.

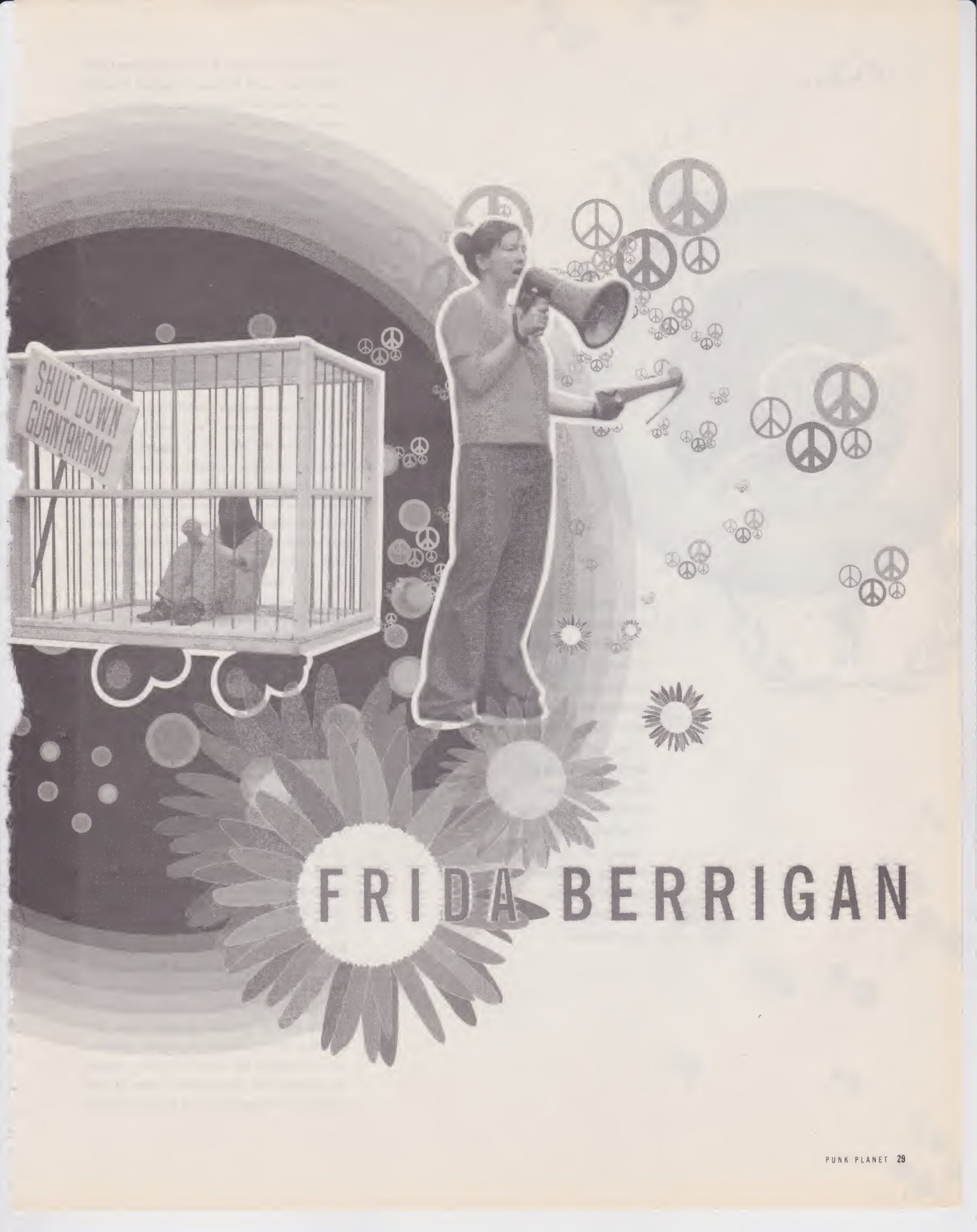
Interview by **Jessica Stein**

## **Tell us the story of your walk to Guantanamo. What was that like?**

Let's see . . . It's interesting, right now, to think about how much we know about Guantanamo, because even a year ago, a year and a half ago, we didn't know very much. First it was like, “Oh my god, there's this prison,” and then, “Wow, they're torturing people there.” Just these little bits and pieces of information came out. And some of us had been paying attention to it. And then, in one of those really idle, casual conversations, someone said, “You know, we should do a protest there.” ¶ Then in July of last year, we got word that a lot of the prisoners had begun a hunger strike. And this hit home in a different way. These guys have nothing. Some of them probably don't even know what country they're in; they're just in custody, with the sense that they could be there forever. ¶ So a bunch of us started paying much closer attention, and taking seriously this demand, this call, from these men there. In a statement that got out through a prisoner's lawyer, they said, “We're going to fast until we die or we're let out of here, and the American people have to do something.” And we thought, “Well, OK.” A group of us had already been meeting, and this idea was sort of abstractly blowing around, but the hunger strike really added this gravity and urgency to the whole thing. ¶ We had a friend who happened to be going to Cuba, and we asked him to check it out for us, see how close we could get [to the prison]. Through him, we got a better sense of the geography of occupation, and the geography of this legacy of the US imperial project. The base of Guantanamo is huge; it straddles the bay of Guantanamo, on the eastern end of the country; it's surrounded by multiple fences; and the outside border is guarded by the Cuban military. Basically he said there's no way to get anywhere near anything that would even look like a military base, much less a prison camp where people are being tortured and abused. The closest thing was this lookout that the Cuban tourist bureau manages, where you can see the base down in the distance. We were really disappointed. ¶ By then it was the end of the summer, we'd been meeting two-three months, doing all this studying, doing all this research. And we had this all-day meeting to figure out what we wanted to do. It was re-







FRIDA BERRIGAN





I've never had an experience like this before, with a group of people I totally trust, where the craziest ideas, you know, can sound crazy, but people absorb them and let them sink in, and there's this collective risk-taking that can happen. So in this meeting, we came up with this idea of walking to Guantanamo.

ally—neat. I've never had an experience like this before, with a group of people I totally trust, where the craziest ideas, you know, can sound crazy, but people absorb them and let them sink in, and there's this collective risk-taking that can happen. ¶ So in this meeting, we came up with this idea of walking [to Guantanamo]. Through walking we could push the boundaries. Our friend had gotten on a bus, followed all the rules, gotten to the end of the road and then stopped. And we thought, "Well, what if we walked, and told the story of the effort it takes to get there, and how hard we were trying by walking?"

**Can you say a little more about Guantanamo itself? Why does the US have a prison in a country that we don't even have . . .**

Formal relationships with? Yeah. During the Spanish-American war, which the Cubans called the War of US Aggression, the invasion of Cuba, 1904-5, when we took Cuba from the Spanish, that was the piece that we held on to when we turned the rest of the country over to the Batista regime. It was useful for us as we extracted resources from Latin America, as sort of a way station. We have a treaty with Cuba; I saw a copy of it. It's from 1903, 1904. It says the US base there will be used only to transport iron and coal, something like that, and we pay the Cuban government every year. The Castro regime has never cashed the check; it's this little act of resistance that delegitimizes our hold on this piece of land. So we've held it for more than 100 years. We've had US soldiers there all that time, and then in 1993, when Haitian refugees were trying to come to the US, we ended up holding them there. That was the precedent, and what members of the administration were thinking about when they explicitly went looking for a place where they could have this prison that would be unreachable by US law. ¶ So, we wanted to go there. We learned that from Santiago, the second largest city in Cuba, it's about 120 kilometers [about 75 miles] to somewhere near the base at Guantanamo. ¶ From there things unfolded. We kept meeting and presenting this idea to other people; we started raising money; and we thought about the mandate in the Gospels to visit the prisoners, to perform the works of mercy, clothe the naked, feed the hungry. Many of the people in the group were out of the Catholic



Worker movement; I was one of three not living in a Catholic Worker community. ¶ I was totally committed to this idea. This walking just felt so right. The logistics of walking made a lot of sense, and the political project of walking [made sense] in the sense of telling the story to the American people of how far away Guantanamo is, and why the administration went to such great lengths to put it there; and when those two things fused with this Biblical mandate, this thing that Jesus said, "What we do to the least of these, we do to Christ himself," or god himself, or herself—when those things came together, I was so committed to it. ¶ So I had this big battle in myself between hearing all these people I respected say, "If the Cuban government says no, you just have to appreciate that." This professor who I respect a lot, who's worked on Cuba for decades, she told me, "You're not going to be able to do it. You're going to waste your money, you're going to get on a plane and fly to Cuba and they're going to say you can't come in." ¶ So we got on a plane and flew to Cuba on December 5, 2005.

#### **In spite of all the no's.**

In spite of all the no's. Some directly to our face. We flew to Cuba on this rickety little plane, with duct tape across the door, and rum out of a big bottle. It was something like 3 in the afternoon. I thought, "I want to keep my head about me, but I really want some rum!" ¶ There were 23 of us—two people had gone early to set up things—and there we were. We got into Cuba on Monday night, December 6th. Our plan had been to start walking the next morning. That didn't quite happen.

#### **What did?**

As I said, we'd been meeting, we all knew each other really well, there were some people I'd known my entire life. There were three couples and a bunch of other people. We were about equal numbers of men and women. The youngest was 24 and the oldest was 79. We had a nun and a priest, and a lot of trust amongst us. ¶ When we got there, immigration showed up. Very scary men, in very proper uniforms. "Hey, you guys aren't tourists." We said, "You're right, we're not tourists, this is what we're going to do, we're going to start walking tomorrow." ¶ The guy takes one of our visas, turns it over and reads

in English. You know what's written on the back of a tourist visa: you can go to the beach, pump money into the Cuban economy, that's about it. He said, "You guys are talking about walking, camping, this political project, and you don't have the right visa for it." He basically threatened to deport us. ¶ So we had a long meeting with these guys. Finally one of them says, "We really like this thing that you're doing, but you just can't come here and do it." There's this solidarity organization, Amistad, the Cuban Institute for Friendship between the People, and the immigration people said, "If you can get them to support what you're doing, you can do it. But you can't just walk out of here tomorrow morning." ¶ And then we had this huge split in the group between those who were like, "No, we came here to walk and we've got to start walking," and those who wanted to at least go through the motions, and really didn't want to get deported. I thought about trying to be an activist in New York City, and being the activist that got deported by the Cuban government, and that would just not add to my cred at all. [Laughs.] If it were going to happen as we got to the gates of Guantanamo, and we had walked all this way, that would have been one thing. But to get off the plane one day, and get thrown on a plane the next day, it wasn't what I wanted. Not for myself, or the group, or all the people who had supported us.

#### **So you fought it.**

We really fought it out. I'd never fought anything out like this. And the first full day that we were there was the third anniversary of my dad dying. My whole family was together in Salisbury, Maryland, and here I was. It was going to be emotional no matter what, and it was extra emotional to have this throwdown inside the group. The people who were ready to walk were the older people in the group who were friends of my dad's, who were like, "We walk across military bases in the States, we don't obey any laws, we don't listen to any authority, let's go." I heard that, and that was like my dad talking to me. Yet it would have jeopardized everything. ¶ So cool heads prevailed. We met with Amistad. I think they had had time to check up on us, our preparation, our background, because by the end of that day, Tuesday, they were ready to roll with us. ¶ So we started walking on Wednes-

day. But we started walking having had this big fight within the group. It sorted itself out as we walked, but it took a little while. And then we were just walking, in this rhythm of silent walking and reflective walking, and chatty, gossipy, two-by-two walking. Each of us adopted a prisoner, and would read the account of that particular prisoner over and over again. We got into this rhythm. And meanwhile, there's this beautiful countryside. And every once in a while I'd be like, "Shit, I'm in Cuba. And it is beautiful." And the people were—it's almost a cliché, but they were so welcoming.

#### **People came along while you were on the walk?**

People were walking along the road. It's the one road between these two big cities, essentially. Everybody knew we were this group of Americans, where we were going, where we had come from. People walked with us and chatted. All the cars going by, trucks filled with people, all manner of vehicle honking, "Yay, yay, yay." We would send someone ahead to see about a piece of land where we could camp for the night and people were like, "Oh yeah, sure." Which was staggering. Families were really poor, but not abject at all. The people we stayed with were really healthy, and there was electricity and running water, and land that they owned and farmed and gardened on. People were proud of what they had. ¶ We walked for six days, Wednesday to Monday. Around 4, 5 o'clock on Monday we arrived at the end of the line. The end of the line was a cow fence, a couple of strands of barbed wire, about five miles away from the prison. We walked out of the city of Guantanamo and it was just flat. Hot and still and flat, just this straight road.

#### **Where did you stay once you were there?**

We camped out. We arrived late on Monday, and we just stayed. It was surprisingly emotional, given that there's no visible emblem of this American military base, or the prison or anything like that. You can't see anything, but it felt like we had gotten where we were going. We were told by the soldiers guarding the checkpoint that the base was there, turn that way; and for the rest of our time, that's where we were turned. We set up our little camp, a little altar/vigil area. We had a Mass that evening, then a final dinner be-



fore starting our fast. ¶ The next morning we each took responsibility for two-hour chunks of time, and we read accounts, or read from the Bible. We said the Rosary a lot. I'm a kind of weird Catholic. You know my parents—nun and priest—but we never went to church growing up. So I've never said the Rosary before in my life. But it's a nice way to spend time. You're thinking about the fact that the central figure of our faith was someone who was tortured by the state, by an empire. That resonated really deeply. So there was a lot to think about and reflect on, a lot of energy to send that last little bit [to the prison]. We all had this sense that we had come really far, and that we had overcome a lot—mostly overcome our own privilege and our need to be in control—to get here. We had to roll with a lot. ¶ On Wednesday we had a press conference. That was fun. The AP and Reuters came all the way from Havana to meet us. Then the next day we continued the vigil, and the following day we got on our rented little busses and went back to Santiago. And that was really, really hard. ¶ The day before we left, after the press conference, an AP article came out and it included a statement from the spokespeople at the base. Now we had been calling the Pentagon, and the Navy, and the Justice Department, calling everybody, calling, calling, "Let us in, here we are." And we were told no over and over again. And in the AP article, the Guantanamo command issued a statement that said something to the effect of, "Yes, we know there are protesters here; no, we have not seen them. Have no fear; the base is functioning normally." And that was very . . .

#### Disheartening?

It was really disheartening. "Functioning normally"? What is normal? Normal is water boarding, normal is sexual humiliation, normal is beating, and all of this. To say nothing of just the fact that they're there. ¶ One night we went up this little hill, and we could see down into the plain, and you could see the outlines of the base at night, because it was all lit up. It was amazing, because you could see really far, in all directions, and nothing, nothing was as bright as this thing. There was this searchlight going. It was straight out of *Lord of the Rings*, the 'ceaselessly spinning eye' of Mordor. It was such an evil, evil thing, and you could just feel it. ¶

So we were sitting there, praying and fasting. We did our final liturgy, and then broke our fast, and everyone was just sobbing. All the Bible readings were about prisoners being freed, and walking, and working for justice; all this stuff resonated really deeply, and that day was no different. And then the busses were there, and it was time to go.

#### How was your return home?

We kind of eased back in. You go from this place where there's no advertising, no extra noise, no extra bullshit. Slowly you go from that place back to a big city, in Cuba; and from that big city in Cuba—where there's still not a lot of extraneous stuff—to Santo Domingo, where there's cripples in the middle of the street, people begging, all this advertising, all this gross sex flesh stuff, this real consumption of people; and then you come back to Newark. ¶ We got back to Newark, and I was totally terrified. I don't know what I thought was going to happen. We go through Customs, we're all split up. We filled out our customs forms honestly, because we had gone really publicly. I think most people wrote "US detention facility at Guantanamo Bay." The woman didn't even look at my little blue customs form; she ran my passport and was like, "Huh. You have to go through extra stuff." ¶ So they go through all our stuff. Well, they try. The first woman's backpack that they opened is disgusting. All of us had tried to bring as little as possible. So it's all really dirty, filthy clothes that she's been wearing for two weeks. The customs people were traumatized. As more and more of us show up—all sunburned and scrawny—she's like, "I'm not looking through everybody's bags. I just can't do it." And then we're out. ¶ And then there's [the question of] what do we do with this experience. How do we do what is actually a lot harder than going on this trip and doing this exciting, bold thing—the work here, to shut down Guantanamo and address this culture of impunity and lawlessness. That's what I've been trying to do, and that seems a lot harder. But the work is really here.

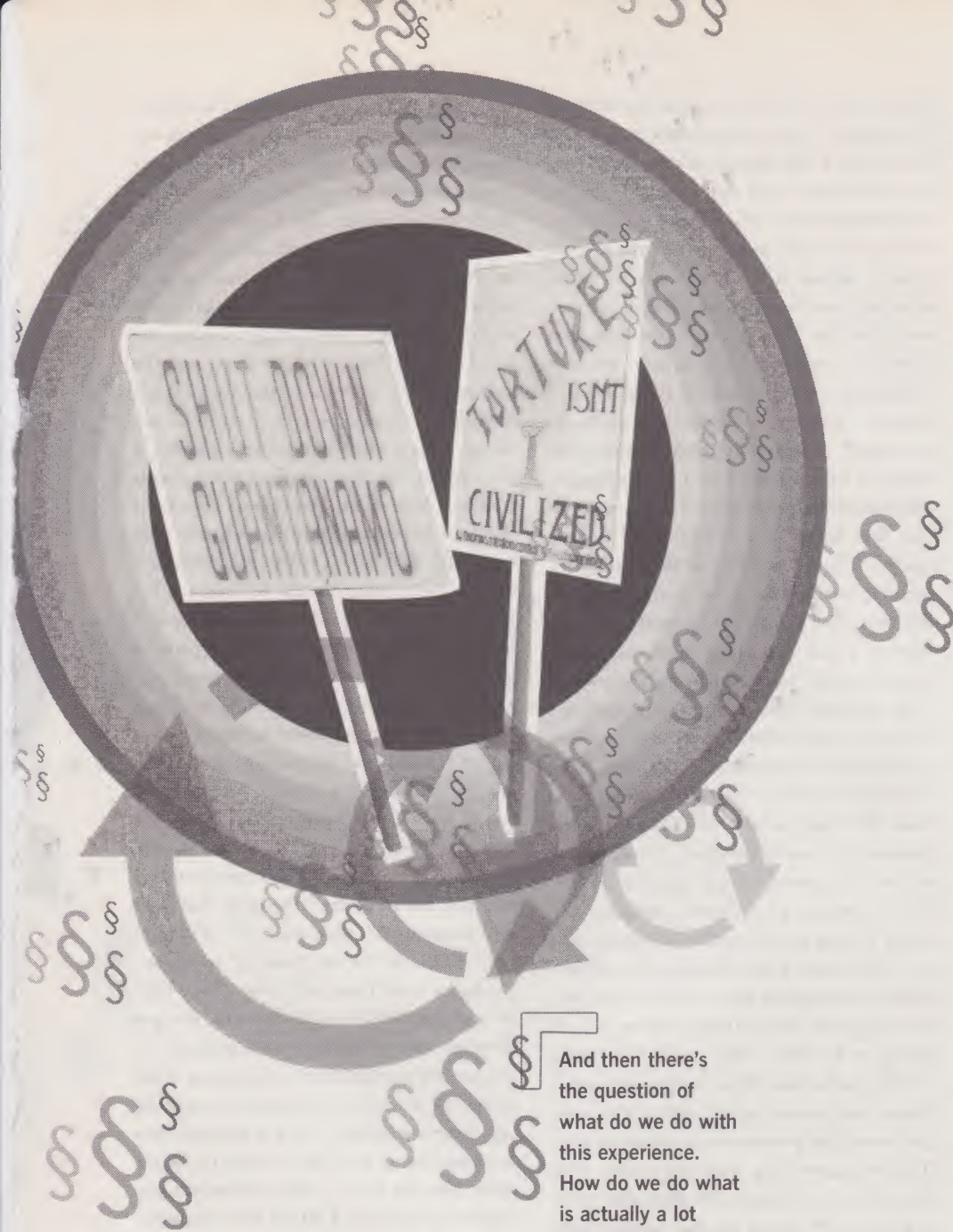
**Say more about Witnesses Against Torture, because it sounds like you are doing some of that work here.**

Yeah. We are. We're trying to do a couple of things. One is to manifest Guantanamo as much as possible, so we have these orange T-shirts, and we have this cage [like the prisoners are often put in], and jumpsuits [like the prisoners wear], and now 3 or 4 actions at the US mission to the UN.

#### Twenty five people were arrested at the one on June 26.

Yeah. Three didn't bring ID with them and took the names of prisoners at Guantanamo who had reportedly killed themselves. And on May 1 we had a big action—no arrests—with about 70 people, mostly religious leaders and lay people of different traditions. That was pretty exciting. ¶ So we're trying to have these actions, doing as much speaking as we can, and asking people to do whatever they can. Trying not just to do the kind of radical witness piece of it, but also the step-by-step organizing work, the bringing-people-along work, that isn't so much a part of the culture of the radical Catholic left. I'm enjoying that. ¶ And we're thinking about what we do next. One idea came on the heels of the action on the 26th, where three people took the names of the prisoners. When they were processed out, they went before a judge and were able to explain why they had been through the system as John Does, because the system wouldn't accept these names that they had taken. Their lawyer got the names of the three men in the court record. They had the sense that this is the prisoners' only chance—I mean, they're dead now—to be spoken for in the US criminal justice system. ¶ And we started thinking, What would it look like if on the anniversary of Guantanamo being opened to these enemy combatants, these prisoners from all over the world—January 11, 2002 is the date we've ascertained that prisoners were first brought to Guantanamo—what if we did an action where we had as many people as are in Guantanamo still? Right now there are 420, but they're trying to move people out. What would it look like for us to have that many people all go into the system with these names? We're committed to doing it, and we've gotten a lot of people like, "Wow, OK, I'll do that." We think it would be a couple of days in the DC system, which is slower moving than the NY system. ¶ So we're planning for that, thinking about what that would look like, and how to prepare





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people. There are some people who are like, "Oh yeah, piece of cake." And some people for whom that's a really huge step. Myself included; the longest I've ever been was that 24 hours [during the RNC]. ¶ So that's what we're doing right now. We're also continuing to think about what it means to be part of a campaign to shut down Guantanamo, when President Bush is saying, "Oh, I'd like to see Guantanamo shut down." How to not be coopted, when what he means when he says shut down Guantanamo is to shut these people further into this legal black hole; and what we mean is a reckoning with how unjust this whole system is. They're two different things, except they're the same words. This administration is a real mastermind of cooption and obfuscation and lying. They're real good at it. It's like the understatement of the year! But they really are.

**Let me play devil's advocate about the action in January. Some people would say, "What's that going to do?" How do you quantify, or just explain, this kind of tactic?**

Well, the first answer is that there is a hope that things will change as a result of this. The American system will be staggered by this collective act, see the error of its ways, and repent. But there also is this other thing. The easiest way to explain that is to talk about AJ Muste. There's this great story; I think about it all the time. AJ Muste was an older activist during the Vietnam War—he had already done all this stuff—and he's out in front of the White House during the early days of the war. He's got this little sign; it's pouring rain, it's freezing cold, he's all by himself. Some reporter recognizes him and says, "Mr Muste, here you are out in the rain, all alone, with your little soggy 'Stop the War in Vietnam' sign. Is anything going to change because of what you're doing?" ¶ He says, "I hope things will change because of this, but I'm doing this so that I don't change. I'm doing this so that I'm not changed by America." ¶ It's clever and cute but it's also really true. This is such a cooptive culture. It's so seductive, and so placating. The default is to be comfortable all the time, or to remove yourself. There are many walls up for most of us. Those of us who are white, well-educated and privileged, we don't see barriers, we don't see gates; yet we don't step outside all that much. There's an extraordinary amount of self-



censorship that's unconscious, that's just a part of us. This is about doing something that allows us to break out of that for a short period of time.

**So you've grown up with this, as a tactic, as an idea. What was that like, growing up in this movement, growing up at Jonah House? Did you ever want to just go play Barbies?**

Jonah House was founded in 1973, in the twilight days of the Vietnam War, by my mom and my dad and a number of other people. They had been activists, all of them, in the Vietnam War movement. They had seen a lot of people become really, really active, and then flame out. So they thought about how to make this sustainable. They thought, "What if this was our whole lives, and there were enough of us that we could take care of each other, trade off on being the caretakers and the activists." They also wanted to challenge the idea of the women keeping the home fires burning while the men went out to the barricades. ¶ So they moved into a poor neighborhood in Baltimore, a community where my dad had been a priest. There were 10 of them, at times, in this house. They didn't want to live on donations or be dependent on anybody, so they painted houses. They dumpster dived for food, and shared a lot of that with the people in the neighborhood. ¶ Then kids came. They were Catholic, totally ignorant of how this works, I guess. They were trying not to have kids, and then had two over the course of a year and a half. Me and my brother Jerry, Irish twins. ¶ We grew up in this tall, skinny rowhouse. We were hand-to-mouth. We went to the school down the block, this really poor school. We were the only white kids in our class. We were homeschooled until we were five, so we went to school knowing how to read and do math and all that, and were put in the same grade. We were essentially treated like twins for a long time. My mom is a twin, so that may have had something to do with it.

**Did you enjoy it?**

It was a weird place to grow up. We didn't know it for a while, just like we didn't know we were different, in a lot of ways. We didn't know we were white until a certain point, or that that meant something. We didn't know that not everybody lived with a lot of other people. Most of our classmates

lived with one adult or a couple generations of women. People were really poor. And we were too. We got all of our food from the dumpsters, and our clothes from the secondhand store, our no-name sneakers. But we were a lot shabbier than the kids we went to school with. There was no back-to-school outfit, all that flash or the extra effort that a lot of people put into how they look, because it's important. We were definitely the weird kids. ¶ It was hard. I wanted a lot to be different. But where do you start? "I want a bologna sandwich for lunch, I want a juice box, I want a brand-new lunchbox every year. I don't want to use this brown paper bag until it falls apart." There was this enforced simplicity that was intense, and really counter-cultural. Way before I knew what that word meant, I had this sense that everything about the way I was being brought up was at odds with the culture. At a certain point I was like, I can't fit in. I'm white, I got these weird clothes, I got these weird ideas, I got this weird lunch, I just gotta go with it, wear the three-corner hat—I had this little colonial hat that I just loved. I just decided at a certain point I was going to be strange. ¶ I've thought a lot about rebellion, because it's the question that everybody asks us. I think that kids rebel against bullshit. Kids rebel against lies, and the fact that their parents lie to them and say it's all going to be fine. They reach this point where they're like, Wow, my parents aren't happy, my parents aren't doing what they believe in, my parents aren't whole people. They're pretending, and that sucks. How can they tell me what to do when they're lying to me? We never hit that point. There was a lot of hard stuff, but we were never lied to. ¶ But there were things to be annoyed about, things to be frustrated with, like a lot of people around, all the time. You were never alone, and that was annoying. Probably 100 people lived in this house, over the course of the time that we were living there. Which is a huge number of people.

**Can you tell us more about your mom? She hasn't gotten the spotlight your dad and uncle have, but it sounds like she's been a longtime, committed activist all along as well.**

Oh, yeah. She's phenomenal. She's a

very affectionate mother. She's been described to me by other people as this archetypal mother figure. I think that's true, but there are also these clear lines. She's really tough. She's an extraordinary facilitator, a phenomenal speaker. And she taught me that you work at something like that; it's not a gift, but a skill. And she never stops working. As her daughter I worry about that, and the impact of that on me and the work ethic I have. But as a person trying to be an activist, she's a phenomenal role model. ¶ It's interesting. She smokes; she's always smoked. You're indoctrinated in school that you have to get your parents to stop smoking. My sister used to say [little kid voice], "All I want for my birthday is for you to stop smoking, Mommy, so you will be alive in the future." But at a certain point I was like, "Look, she's smoking, and she's not doing anything else. She's got this five-minute little moment, maybe ten times a day, where she's not doing anything else. And I don't care. I want her to have that five minutes." If it's not a healthy thing to do, she makes up for it with all the other phenomenal things that she does. ¶ She's the glue that held the community together. My dad was very, "This is the way I see it," and people had a hard time with that. They kept struggling with that. Eventually she got through to my dad about how didactic he can be. He worked on a lot, because of my mom. He worked on sexuality, accepting my sister's sexuality. He did that because my mom made him do it. And my sister made him do it, too. She just wasn't going to be closeted. ¶ Right after September 11th, my dad was in jail and he got put in the hole. He disappeared. He and my mom wrote every day, and all of a sudden there were no more letters. She called and called the prison, and it took her two weeks to find him. All these people in prison got disappeared, "for their own protection," is what we eventually found out. Finally he gets out of the hole, he gets transferred to Ohio, and my sister, she's at Oberlin, drives out by herself to go visit him. She's decided she's going to tell him she's a lesbian. I hear this later, and I'm like, "Kate, this is kind of a heavy thing to lay on him, right then."





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She said, "Well, it was just time." Eventually he respected that, and grappled with it. ¶ That bothers me a lot, that this trope of the Berrigan brothers continues to dominate. I'm 32, and I speak all these places, and do all this work, and so often, just automatically, people put in my little bio, "Daughter of Phillip Berrigan." It's this awkward job. I recognize that who my parents are is a big part of who I am, but I don't quite need it in my bio. But if you're going to put it in there, I don't just have one parent. You either have to take it out, or you have to put them both in. People are always so embarrassed, and so apologetic, but it's this automatic thing. And it's interesting, because it doesn't happen to my brother. He's not aware of it in the same way, and it doesn't happen to him in the same way.

**It happens to women.**

It happens to women. Yeah.

I feel like everyone has to navigate that heritage, particularly as we reach our early 30s and recognizably become adults. Especially because you're in the same field—if you can call anti-war direct action a "field"—on the one hand you can draw this straight line from your parents to you, and the work that you're doing, but there are also ways that it's different. Everybody goes through that gift bag from the ancestors, you know; this is going on the altar, this is going to the Salvation Army, and I wonder what that's been like for you.

Someone once said to me, "Oh, Frida Berrigan, you're part of the First Family of American activists." I've been called "the princess of the peace movement." Number one, would you ever say that to my brother? Would that ever be OK, or even purportedly complimentary, like that's something I want? ¶ But I do have this sense that I could be pretty entitled, that I could say things in a certain way to a certain group of people, and it would carry a whole lot of weight. I'm conscientiously wary of that. At the War Resisters League, last Friday, we had this potluck to begin the national committee meeting. I'm fasting on Fridays, as part of the "Troops Out Fast" thing in DC—there's all these people fasting at the White House, it's an open-ended fast—but this potluck dinner happened on Friday, so I made enchiladas,

brought guacamole, but a bunch of people came really late, left early, didn't help clean up. ¶ Sometimes Ian, my partner, will get on my back. "You don't have to stay late and help clean up. You don't have to be the person making the copies." He's right, in a sense—there's ways of sharing the work, and delegating, and bringing other people in—there's definitely this "I can do everything" thing I struggle against. But there is also this desire to check that kind of space that people would give me a little too freely, a little bit too much because they are looking directly at me.

**You talk about your mom's little smoke breaks, and learning from that how to take care of yourself. What else do you do to make this activism, this life, sustainable?**

Well, I work really hard to find things funny. I connect to my family and friends with a lot of humor, and hold that out. That's one thing. I also try and keep things in perspective; there's this adage about being a pessimist in terms of years and an optimist in terms of decades, and that's a good check against, "If I'm up until 2 every night, things will change." It's not going to hinge on me; and it's certainly not going to hinge on me as a sick, spaz, tired, burnt-out shell of a person. I won't make the revolution irresistible by being a grouchy hag. [Laughs.] I'm not gonna do it. And that doesn't mean I can check out, but it does mean that I don't have to do everything. ¶ So there's this humility, which is tough for activists in general. And then it's a lot about relationships. The people I work with now—I want to work with them in 20 years, 30 years. I want a movement that children can be a part of, that old people can be a part of. The relationships are as important as the end product. The end products kind of don't matter. We all flamed out for the RNC; it was significant, but now it's two years ago, and things aren't appreciably better because so many of us worked so hard.

**I think it comes back to the means being what matters question. "Oh, well, what about the ends, what about the ends." Well, no.**

Yeah. Ten years from now we might look back and say, "The RNC was the beginning of the end of the American empire," but we can't predict any of that. ©



**A**t the callow age of 23, Dash Shaw has written and illustrated two graphic novels, *Love Eats Brains* and *The Mothers Mouth*, a highly acclaimed short story collection, *Goddess Head*, has seen his work appear in numerous anthologies, and still finds time to play bass in his band, also named Love Eats Brains, and act in various indie film projects. In the insular comics community Shaw has made a name for himself (and a good one it is) by willfully eschewing the mainstream to follow his own decidedly original and peculiar muse.

In person, Shaw is as much an anomaly as his work. He's a former D&D nerd and Boy Scout, who girls fawn over and who emanates a relaxed sense of cool, even while effusing about favorite science fiction movies and the power of self-help courses.

In the following interview, conducted on a typical sweltering day in Charlotte, North Carolina, Shaw talks about the influence of his father, his introduction to alternative comics, his melancholic homecoming, and his music. Oh—and since you were wondering: Dash is his real name.

Interview by **Robert Young**

**You have a very unusual story in that your Dad was making comics with you when you were young. How old were you when that began?**

Very, very young. Before I could read actually. My dad would write in the words so it was really early. I don't know what age.

**So the visual language of comics was sort of imprinted on you even before you could read?**

Yeah, definitely. I think I was lucky or fortunate that I didn't have to fight my parents to get into comics. My dad had a box of underground comics, and he lived on Haight Street for awhile. And I would crawl into that space and look at those books before I should have—age-wise—been exposed to that. [Laughter.]

**Do you still have any of the comics you made together?**

Yeah, I have some. I have one where I really wanted to see the movie *Jaws* but he wouldn't let me see it, so he told me the story and I illustrated it.

**He thought it was too violent?**

Yeah, but my drawings were pretty violent too.

**A couple of years ago in a profile on Ninthart.com you said: "I'm not like Crumb, who's constantly drawing on a napkin wherever he goes. I do figure drawings, but I spend more time thinking about comics, the design and everything, more than the actual hand-drawing time." Is the drawing secondary to the concept in your comics?**

Usually when I'm sketching, I'm doing small thumbnail layouts for comics. Not casual figures or doodles. It's more preliminary work on comics or an idea for a sequence. I like drawing and figure drawing, it's just my weakness that I'm not one of those people. When I was working on "Echo and Narcissus" in *Goddess Head* a lot of it involved sitting in my dorm room just thinking of different ways that I could draw the same thing. Because the story is already written for me and it has things like a chase scene in the woods, I had to think about different ways to do it and plan it out. That took more time than the actual putting the ink on the page.

**I know early in your career that you were strongly influenced by Paul Pope but you've since deviated far from your early style to a much more utilitarian approach; less flashy, more about servicing the story. To that end I see a Chester Brown influence, but what other artists have influenced you of late?**

By far the biggest influence on my regular drawing has been James McMullan's High-Focus Drawing class at SVA. He wrote a book called *High Focus Drawing* that I recommend to everyone. That class was life changing. Prior to taking that class, my drawing was incredibly insecure. I would try to mask my dead, flat drawings with stylish, brushy strokes, splatters, and other lame tricks. Looking at some of that stuff now makes me choke. Figure drawing is handy for comic drawing, but they're different animals entirely. I like all of the top cartoonists you'd think I would like: Chester Brown, Chris Ware, Richard McGuire, etc. Even naming those few doesn't feel right. The list is too long. My main complaint with a lot of the cartoonists around today is that they're too consistent, too

predictable. I understand that it's mature to do the same thing over and over, like the filmmaker Ozu, but I prefer the immature filmmakers who are always trying to reinvent their approach, even if they fall flat on their face sometimes.

**What about critical reaction to your comics. It seems to have been overwhelmingly positive, but does it have any effect on your approach?**

Most of the criticism has been positive. Some critics don't get why I would choose to draw one way if it's clear I can also draw another way that they find more appealing. Whenever I get an e-mail from someone saying they liked a story I did or have comments about one, or something like that, it's great and means a lot more to me. It really motivates me to get back to the drawing board. I guess it's difficult for me most comics criticism seriously.

ics community is so small, which I like, but it makes most of the reviews more like suggested reading. It's rare that there's any intelligent criticism or analysis. It's a shame because I love reading criticism and analysis. I'll regularly pick up a book I've read before just to read a new introduction or afterword, and Ray Carney's "Path of the Artist" essays were very influential to me. The situation is changing, though. There is a small handful of smart comics critics now, and there will be more and more over time. The fluff will move aside.

**Can you talk a little about the Meathaus collective and your involvement with them?**

Meathaus publishes an anthology that I've contributed to, and they published a comic I did freshman year [at SVA] called *Garden Head*. They have a great website: [www.meathaus.com](http://www.meathaus.com) with a blog and free comics. It's really just a bunch of friends that occasionally pool some of their work into an anthology. There's no clear leader or editor. Many of the artists have moved to different cities, so the website is a way for everyone to keep in touch.

**You went to The School of Visual Arts, right?**

Yeah, but I met them before I took one class at SVA, because I was friends with Becky [Cloonan] and there was SPXiles . . .





## DASH SHAW



**SPXiles was the post-September 11 alternative to the Small Press Expo, because it was canceled that year?**

Yeah. I moved to New York a week before September 11, and classes were canceled for awhile. I went to SPXiles with Becky and I met those guys and they were some of the first friends I had in New York. The ones I hung with the most were Brandon Graham, Farel Dalrymple, Tom Herpich, and Jim Campbell. There were parties and I would talk to Tomer Hanuka and the other guys, but Brandon and I would wander the streets, and I'd go to bookstores with Tom. Up to that point I don't think I'd seen any Chris Ware. Those guys knew all these comics, and they gave me a crash course in alternative comics. It was another situation where I completely lucked out.

**And yet you came from a background where you knew about underground comics from your Dad—people like Crumb and Spain, but not the current generation of cartoonists?**

I knew about the artists who were carried in the little store near my house, but they were sort of the pseudo-alternative artists. Like I knew about Sam Kieth, but I didn't

know about Dan Clowes. I knew about people like David Mack.

**The ones who were straddling alternative work and the mainstream?**

Paul Pope was in that category too. And you can see it in my work from that time. It was sort of [an amalgam of] Sam Kieth, Paul Pope, and David Mack.

**In an interview on The Pulse website you said you conceived the story "The Roots Hold Your Feet Into Place" from *Goddess Head* "One night when I was very frustrated when I was staying in Richmond, and I was feeling stuck there forever and helpless." You're back in Richmond now, do you still find it constraining?**

[Sighs.] I think that's what my new book *The Mothers Mouth* is about. I was in New York and I was surrounded by a lot of successful people and I traveled around awhile, but it ended up that I was back in Richmond, going out with my high school sweetheart. And it was just a complete . . .

**Regression?**

Yeah it was a total regression. It was like the wind had been knocked out of me and

I was back hanging out where I hung out in high school, and running into people that had stayed home. Richmond is an okay place, but I was starting to feel like I could be really successful as an illustrator and cartoonist, and it just went backwards at a point. You know that Civil War reenactment scene was about how my girlfriend and I would go back and do the same things we had done in senior year of high school. Which was kind of nice, but it was also super-depressing.

**I think most people would assume you're being sarcastic when you mention a fascination with people like motivational speaker Tony Robbins and Michael Jackson.**

No, I'm not being sarcastic. Have you taken Tony Robbins' Power Course?

**No, but that's what I want to hear from you. You're not being sarcastic.**

Yeah.

**I think most people are being too cool for school to reveal that sort of thing.**

This interview will reveal that none of these things are ironic, and I actually am a complete nerd. [Laughs.]



You've also expressed a fascination with Michael Jackson.

I really love Michael Jackson too. I loved his performances with The Jackson 5. I think his abilities were forcibly pushed, but I think his goal was to be the consummate entertainer in all forms. Going to the courtroom dressed the way he did, his goal was a performance. And he succeeded, but I think it caused a lot of damage. Junior year [at SVA] I did a thesis on Michael Jackson and I did these large comic paintings. I just got into all the themes of Michael Jackson. You know childhood, and these sexuality issues and appearance. I think I was kind of the laughing stock of SVA for that section; but recently there was that book *Michael Jackson* by Margo Jefferson and there weren't even any photos in the book. It was a serious discussion about Michael Jackson and his interests; The Elephant Man, Barnum & Bailey Circus. So that was reassuring because she ran over all the things I went over in my thesis. As kind of an essay about the issues.

So you actually liked him as a young performer?

Oh yeah, he's amazing.

But you're also interested in how he went off the rails.

Yeah. And he's not really . . . oh you can go on to the next question.

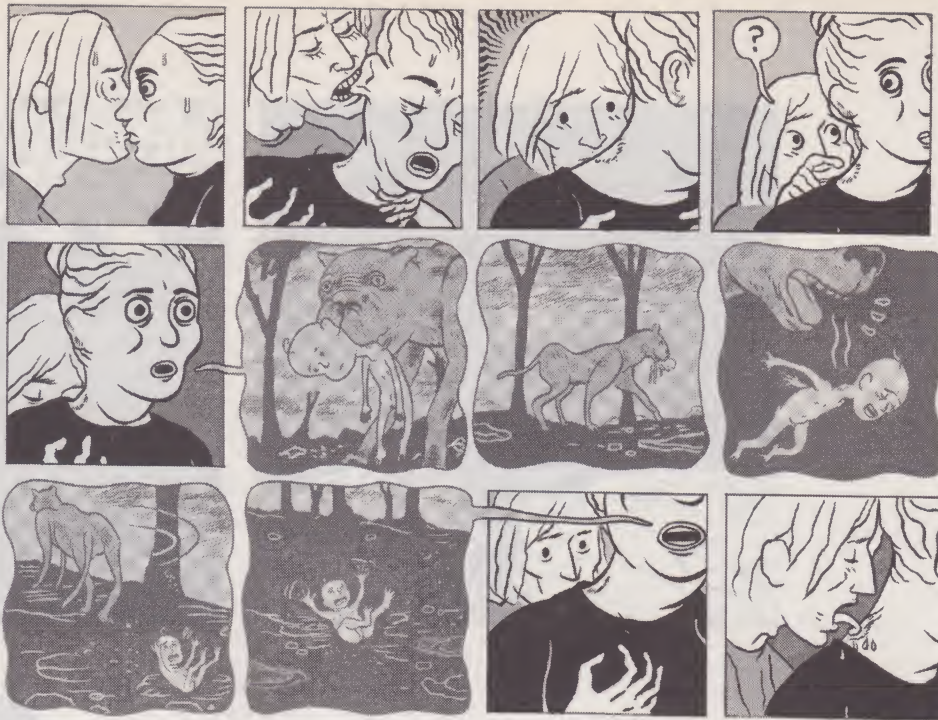
No, continue your thought.

It's just that I could talk about Michael Jackson for hours.

What role do you play in your band, Love Eats Brains?

I play bass, assist in writing songs—primarily the lyrics—and sing sometimes, but only on recordings. I can't sing live because I get too nervous. James does all of the singing when we play live. James is my best friend and he went to SVA as a Fine Arts major for 1 years. He dropped out. We've lived together for the past 3 years and he taught me how to play bass and everything.

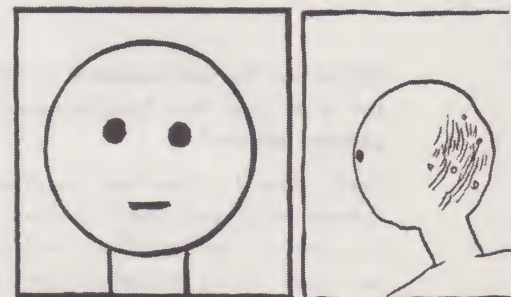
Thus far you're better known as a comics artist than a musician, but given the seductive quality of live performance would you give up comics if the band became successful enough?



## the mother's mouth



ALSO: (BEFORE)  
[close-up] back of Narcissus' head  
[in detail] short hairs, bruises, irritated skin, a



I like playing in the band because it's a social activity that's work but also fun. I need to get away from the drawing board for a couple hours every day otherwise I go crazy, and I don't like doing things that feel unproductive. I get depressed.

No. I like playing in the band because it's a social activity that's work but also fun. I need to get away from the drawing board for a couple hours every day otherwise I go crazy, and I don't like doing things that feel unproductive. I get depressed. So practicing is great because I don't think about drawing while I'm doing it and I get to work on something with friends. James works on the band 24-7.

Does being a cartoonist in any way inform your music, or conversely does being a musician in any way inform your art?

I don't think so. Only as much as doing anything does. If I wasn't working on this with my friends, I don't think I would ever leave the house. And that would get very damaging. So it helps keep me tied to the real world. ©

Robert Young is editor of *The Comics Interpreter* magazine.



# SECRET

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It takes monolithic talent to forge a legacy in the world of music. For Jeremy Enigk, the overwhelmingly talented, somewhat mysterious 32-year-old vocalist/guitarist/pianist behind the genre-defining Sunny Day Real Estate and the grandiose overtures of the Fire Theft, not to mention his own starkly honest solo work, establishing a legacy has been quite the tumultuous experience. While Enigk's highly-lauded, ceaselessly-evolving musical odyssey has brought the Washington native adulation and a sense of self-satisfaction, the journey has been a jagged one filled with hills and slumps; ecstasy and heartache; anxiety and elation.

Much has been said about Sunny Day Real Estate, whose starkly beautiful sound and downright enigmatic collective persona was an introduction to the world of a then late-teens/early-20s Enigk and his incomparably haunting voice. This quality had consistently testified with so much emotion that the underlying tones of melancholy, anger, and happiness all appeared ready to go to war with each other. In many cases, that sonic battle was simultaneously waged within Enigk's own life. While Enigk's Sunny Day brethren—most notably, guitarist Daniel Hoerner, bassist Nate Mendel and drummer William Goldsmith—played a major role in the cadence of their group, Enigk's raw emotion blistering its way to the surface by way of quivering, aching high notes and soaring choruses continues to draw listeners to this day.

Yet as memorable as Sunny Day's ebullient records and performances were, Enigk has also quietly and humbly forged a powerful collection of solo material over the past decade. The first was his 1996 solo LP *Return of the Frog Queen*, recorded during a brief Sunny Day hiatus. Although it has taken 10 years for his solo follow-up *World Waits* (Lewis Hollow Records)—arguably his most intimate and revealing suite of songs to date—Enigk has lost none of his blistering intensity. Most importantly, *World Waits* finds Enigk delving deeply as he ever has into his own admittedly reclusive spirit only to unveil his most honest reflections thus far committed to wax.

As Enigk has progressed as an artist, so have the rumors surrounding his work, as well as his personality. Enigk, however, remains unaffected by speculation. And maybe the only way to truly come to that conclusion is by meeting the man himself. While coming off a bit nervous after a recent summer performance,

Enigk quickly flashes a smile and opens up when he begins talking about his work and the transformative power that comes along with creating it. His enthusiasm for his new music, as well as a stronger grasp of his purpose in life, is punctuated by a chuckle, the rubbing of his close-cropped cranium, and the occasional wild arm gesticulation to hammer home a point. Most pertinent, however, is the focused look in his eyes, which appears free from the stress of the past.

Taking a cue from the title of his new record, as the world has waited for the next chapter of Enigk's constantly unfolding musical saga, his artistic legacy stands with a long-overdue confidence, which has come about primarily through probing the inner reaches of consciousness through his art—the best way Enigk knows how to express and expound.

Interview by **Brian Peterson**

**The first track on *World Waits* is called "A New Beginning." Is this record truly a fresh start for you?**

Yeah, it is a new beginning because given the past and everything I've been through I feel at this point in my life that there is a new horizon. That's what "A New Beginning" means to me. It is a new day and I've been trying to take off the baggage of the past and start from scratch again and to remember what originally inspired me to be happy. Not so much with music, but in terms of being a human being.

**What inspired you to be happy in the first place?**

At one point in my life I got in the mindset of everything I ever wanted I expected to happen by a certain age. And it didn't happen that way, which was frustrating. So, I had to go to ground zero and rediscover that original inspiration. The happiness really comes back to friendship, the love for music, respect for self, love for family, and re-identifying with my spiritual nature as a human being.

**Many artists shy away from spirituality, but you've never been afraid to embrace the term and define it in your own way.**

Well, I am what I am. I never felt it necessary to be part of specific scene; I'd rather become whole as a human being. It would be nice to be included in some sort of scene on a broad

level, because it has its perks. It makes you feel good because all eyes are on you. But in reality the most important thing is to have a healthy heart, soul, and mind.

**Why do you think so many people are unwilling to tap into their own spirituality?**

It differs from every individual. Some people were raised in a religious realm where they associate spirituality with religion, when in actuality they are quite separate. Other people just don't need it. Life isn't all suffering. If someone just wants to hang out and enjoy their life then that's awesome, so ignoring these things isn't necessarily a bad thing. Maybe ignorance can be bliss in that respect. As for me I feel there is a deeper meaning in life. I don't like to believe that life is just physical and material. I believe in love and I think that love comes from a greater meaning, and that's not something that can be examined in a nutshell, because the meaning of life varies among everyone. For example, I so happen to attach myself to music and that gives me clarity; it's not the end-all, be-all of what makes me happy, but it makes me feel there is a purpose to my life, and that keeps me striving and keeps me alive.

**You seem to have arrived at a really good place in terms of self-contentment. How were you able to come back from your occasional rough patches in the past?**

Ultimately, it's the desire to be positive. The circumstances that create negative thinking make you not want to think positively. If there's a certain circumstance that kicks me in the ass then I want to change that, because I don't want to live in my world of unhappiness. So, I think it is will alone and certain ordeals that make people change.

**All of your previous work has helped you develop quite the legacy for a still-young artist. Has having that level of fame impacted you?**

I'm sure it has impacted me. The fact that the handful of fans that I do have ask me to continue to keep working has encouraged me to keep trying and putting new work out there. Either way, if nobody liked it I'd still be playing music because that's what I love to do. But I guess it has impacted me on that level because I've made it public.

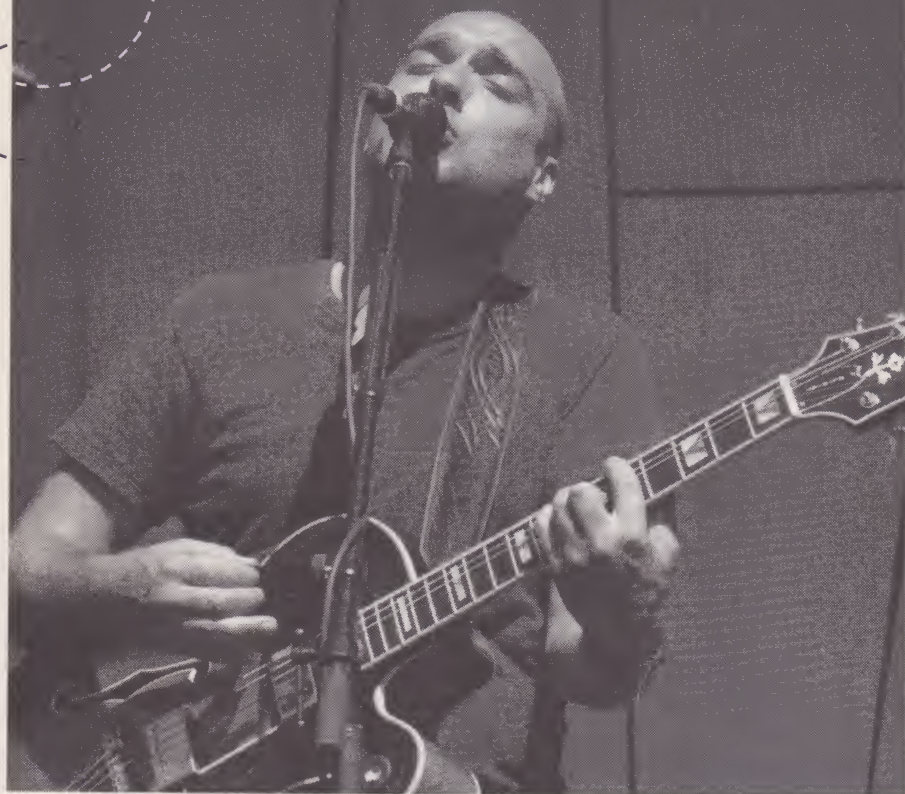




**Jeremy Enigk**



"The happiness really comes back to friendship, the love for music, respect for self, love for family, and re-identifying with my spiritual nature as a human being."



People say, "Hey, keep going," but I try not to let that into my head because I realize that when musicians get on stage it's really just a mask of a human being.

**Do you feel like you've been able to peel off that mask little by little over the years?**

I don't want to bullshit, although I tend to do that. [Laughs.] I don't want to be that mask. When I get on stage I want to be the same person I am off-stage. That's who I am. I think it's silly to play rocker and to dress in rocker clothes and make your hair funny and wear the right shoes. I think falling into those notions is really all about conformity. I believe in the spirit of the individual.

**A lot of people focus on your musical past.**

**Does that focus on the past bother you as an evolving artist?**

No, I'm proud of what I have done. Once again, it's a part of my life and I have to embrace that. Either way, what I'm doing now is what I'm currently focusing on. If things aren't as big now as they used to be then, that's OK because I know in time the new work will catch on. It all comes from the same life.

**During a time when war and cynicism run rampant how do you maintain such a positive and hopeful demeanor?**

I just have a hope that the world consciousness will grow up. I feel like the world's consciousness right now is about 18 years old. It's like the world is

partying and somewhat disillusioned right now. [Laughs.] But eventually the world, hopefully, will grow up to the age of about 40 and realize, "OK, my liver is starting to die, I've smoked too much and my lungs are killing me." So, I hope that we move on to the next phase of human evolution.

**You've spoken of shutting out the world to focus when working on your music. Does isolation conjure your muse?**

I need separation because I love hanging out with my friends and they are actually my biggest obstacle. [Laughs.] I want to hang out with them all the time. I want to have conversations and sit down and have a glass of wine, and I'd rather do that these days, which is probably my largest challenge. I'd rather be spending time with my friends then really focusing hard. It's so easy to chill.

**The chorus of "River to Sea" on *World Waits* is: "Turn around/life is in your hands." When did you come to this realization and how has this impacted you as a person?**

I could relate to lyrics like that but I never really understood them until around the time we did the *Fire Theft* record. That's when I started to understand that you are in control of your own destiny and you are responsible for your own happiness; you alone have the power to change your own world. For a period in my life I used to blame the outside world for my failures in life, and then I realized around that time that I was the one who had the problem.

**After accomplishing so much, what keeps you motivated to create?**

Number one is the fact that I love it. I don't want to be pompous in any way, but I feel like music is what I've been called to do. It's my place in the world and what I was given. At one point I wanted to drop it all away, but it would be a sin if I was to let it go, not only because I love it but because it's changed other people's lives. I've had people come up to me after a show and tell me they wanted to commit suicide and one of my records saved them. It gives me a purpose and it's good to have a purpose in life. ©



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# Freedom Archive

In 1985, Claude Marks and a few other members of the Weather Underground purchased 40 pounds of explosives to blow up a prison in Kansas. The intention, in conjunction with the Puerto Rican Independence group FALN (Armed Forces of National Liberation), was to free the imprisoned Puerto Rican nationalist Oscar Lopez. Law enforcement officials discovered the plot, however, and Marks went underground, living under an assumed name in Pittsburgh so his coworkers and neighbors wouldn't notice he was on the FBI's Most Wanted list. After nine years, he turned himself in, and received a fine of \$1000 and six years in prison.

Now Marks is an archivist, and doesn't open up about those days much anymore. His current work is just as radical, if a bit less destructive: alongside Sele Nadel-Hayes, an excessively bright and engaging young activist, he manages San Francisco's Freedom Archives, a storehouse for over 8000 hours of the most insurrectionary audio ever recorded. Focusing on the progressive history of the Bay Area, the United States, and international solidarity movements, the collection has seeded music programs, news broadcasts, hip-hop recordings, and educational projects throughout the country's airwaves.

All this revolutionary material sits in the Mission District in San Francisco, quietly collecting dust in an area of the country that's seen as many changes as the people whose voices it holds. Until some high-school kid comes along, or some radio broadcaster who wants to shake things up, or some hip-hop poet about to record an album. That's when Marks and Nadel-Hayes make history—their own, their region's, and this nation's—come alive.

Interview by Anne Elizabeth Moore

**So can you give me a tour of what all you do here?**

Marks: First of all, we have this pretty extensive collection of historical material. It's cultural and political, music, poetry, and interviews going back over 30 years. Some of it's in English, some of it's in Spanish. It covers a lot of different interest areas and reflects the work of a lot of independent producers.

**How did the collection get started?**

Marks: We really want to create a way to tap into the history of progressive struggles in a way that people can easily interpret and

reuse to inform people that weren't alive or weren't conscious when those things happened. It's a lot of primary source material. Take for example the occupation of Alcatraz, or the prison movement, the Panthers' poetry that emerges out of the Mission in the '70s that's all focused on Latino stuff either in the streets or the community, or the coup in Chile. Those are the kinds of things we have.

**How were they originally gathered?**

Marks: What we cobbled together is from contacting independent producers. We're really trying to create a people's resource, a community based resource. Not an institutional resource, like at universities, where access is more problematic and defined by a lot of protocols.

Nadel-Hayes: I feel like every time I travel somewhere, someone says, "Hey you know what, my uncle has every tape of *blah blah* and we should really give that to you guys." There are people all over the country, all over the world that have pieces of *huge* movements that have happened.

**How is the collection organized?**



In 1985, Claude Marks and a few other members of the Weather Underground purchased 40 pounds of explosives to blow up a

Marks: We've been working with dozens of people who have come as students or people out of the community to volunteer their time. Their goal is to catalogue the material and figure out how to reuse it as a project. We do at least two documentary projects a year. They're not necessarily formal documentaries. We did something with our youth interns called the Vinyl Project, which is literally a vinyl album of sound samples to be dropped into whatever is being created. The whole idea is to give people an idea of how to tap into this stuff and interpret it and fuse it into emerging culture. So we've got garage people, jazz people, hip-hoppers and people who are doing much more formal work all at the same time being able to sample this stuff. We want it out in the world. We want it up on the web. We don't own it. We're trying to figure out ways people can tap into it. So all this time this cataloguing is happening and young people are in here from high school on up.

**So you must have an outreach arm for high school students?**

Nadel-Hayes: We want to provide a space for young people to really think critically about what it means to be an activist when there's this long history of people that look like them getting locked up and otherwise marginalized for political work. We have young people who come here, learn about the history of the Black movement, of the Chicano movement, of political artists, poets, and musicians, and then take it out to other young people. So much of this material should be taught in schools, but to have young people equipped with the knowledge to teach each other is a whole different level of impact. For us, outreach isn't just about exposing people to the materials here, but to give them access with enough depth that it affects how they see the world and how they work to bring change in it.

**Do intellectual property rights issues concern you? Do you have policies in place for the reuse of this material?**

Marks: We don't have anything formal in place. But because some number of us were part of recording and broadcasting materials originally, we're aware that

it sort of falls into this grey area. We also have a contractual release from The Pacifica Foundation for anything that we hold that went over their air, so anything in our possession that was used in programs produced on Pacifica back then, we have a right to use in an unlimited way. We're a little more careful when we produce a documentary that's going to get replicated and put into stores.

**Can you give me an example of how you might work, then, with work intended for sale?**

Marks: Earlier this year we produced an audio CD and a book on Robert F Williams and Mabel Williams who led the NAACP in North Carolina and armed the community against the Klan. They were forced into exile and did a radio program in Cuba for years, were in China, and traveled to Africa—they were internationalizing the more militant wing of the Black Liberation Struggle in the US starting from the 1950s. We worked with the family very closely for two and a half years before we put this piece out and we got a lot of historical materials together and did an extensive interview with Mabel Williams. ¶ Our approach as





people who produce documentaries is to really empower, as much as possible, those who are the *actual* people involved. Over the course of time we get a lot of feedback, have many conversations about how well the documentary represents their sense of history. This is a principled approach rather than to say we have artistic license to interpret your life. It's more about "does this feel right?" That commits us to philosophical and political conversations with our subjects, which we did. This means that the process of putting something out is on a longer timeline and is very collectivized. Production is also collectivized in that we put together a work team and is also diverse in a lot of ways and totally cross-generational. I've been doing documentaries a long time and somebody who hasn't been doing it as much brings a whole new perspective to the work.

**Yet working collaboratively can take a lot of time.**

Marks: If we're working collaboratively with a group of people that bring different things to the table and everybody is hashing out the end result—or we're working with a family—we end up with something that everyone feels really good about. It takes a long time, but we're not under time constraints. ¶ I think it makes the history more honest and it makes it speak broadly. A lot of the time history is viewed as nostalgia—"Oh that was so cool [but] that's pretty irrelevant." All the textbooks are written like that: "So who

cares? History is a dead end. There you have it." This is not that.

**Somebody's already got that covered.**

Marks: We're trying to figure out a different approach. And that cohabits with this idea of people being able to sample this historical stuff and reinterpret it. Ownership isn't defined by an academic approach or by who has possession of an artifact or anything like that. If it comes out of public moment, *that's* who owns it.

**Do you position yourselves as part of the media reform and media activism movements that are happening right now, or do you see yourselves as more of the independent media within that?**

Nadel-Hayes: What we do here is media reform. In 2005, one of our interns and I went to St Louis for the National Conference for Media Reform. After being immersed in the work of the Freedom Archives for several months, she had a good sense of the importance of having community voices present in media in a meaningful way. Being at the conference opened her eyes about a lot of things about the way she watched TV and how much her voice is not reflected in any of the messaging portraying young people, young women, or people of color. At the same time though, the conference was also a challenging space because there was so little focused on taking action. For a 20-year-old to feel

cut off from the "media reform movement" as it was constructed in that mainstream space—it's not a surprise, but it's also really frustrating.

**If not here, then where?**

Nadel-Hayes: Right. It's here in this neighborhood. *She* should be standing in front of 25,000 people instead of Al Franken. We've heard his voice before. And to have a bunch of people in the room who are very passionate about having different voices heard. It's important for them to know that there's a long line of people with voices who haven't been heard.

Marks: I think the problem with media reform is that it's *reform*. The starting place is shifting so far to the right along with all the other politics in the last years and decades that the starting point is essentially a corporate model. Is the goal to have *Democracy Now!* on another 200 stations, or is it to create other stations that represent people who aren't the Amy Goodmans of the world, who aren't just constantly talking about what happens in Washington. Hillary Clinton is not going to make this a better world for us. ¶ The question is how to create things that are much more challenging to the state, to the empire, and to root them in a way where people can access them in the language they can hear that can give them some direction that doesn't just



we did a program on the Coup in Chile for the 30-year anniversary and one of the people who worked on that was very active in the scene and for the first time in her life she was able to hear a recording of her grandfather doing his own material. It's somewhat symbolic but it's real.

lead them into an electoral path. Not that we shouldn't ever think about that, but that's not the answer, really. That's a reformist answer; It's not a revolutionary answer. I think we're driven by something a lot more powerful in terms of a vision than just, "How do we get Bush out?" and "Anybody but Bush is OK." When in fact everybody in Washington ain't OK.

**Radio people tell me your collection tends to not focus on what we think of as the key figures in any movement, but rather on the people who did the work. This in itself is a fairly radical notion, but I would think this would also make it hard for you to get funding, because our culture does operate on celebrity.**

Marks: [Sarcastically.] We've found it so easy to get funding.

**So how are you funded?**

Marks: Donors. Every 20-dollar check makes a big difference. We have a very small budget, we have a very small overhead, and we don't fly around to all the media reform conferences that exist. The only way we're gonna go is if somebody wants to hear our point of view somehow represented. ¶ One thing that we keep talking about—although there aren't the resources to really make it happen—is that we're not totally unique. There are people who collect graphics; There are publications; There are dis-

tributors. I think it's really important for us to connect people doing important stuff outside of that corporate context and figure out a way in which the collective strength of that can help create new avenues or enrich the ones that exist.

**So do you have a model for that sort of networking? A plan?**

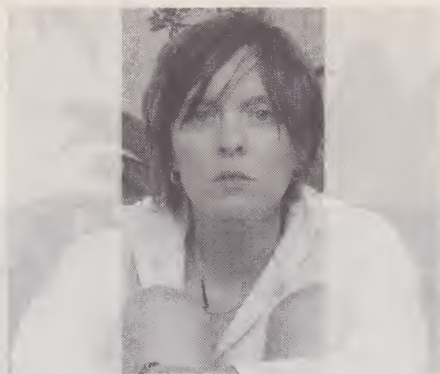
Marks: We're working on some models for that, but we have limited capacities. We're working with the Manilatown Heritage Foundation and their thing is the struggle against gentrification in an Asian community on the borders of Chinatown and the International Hotel struggle. I don't know how familiar you are with it, but this is a struggle that took many years to prevent the eviction of people out of this hotel and, ultimately, the sheriff's department literally rammed their way into the hotel. We're helping them gather, catalogue, and digitize that material with the idea that there'll be a circulating copy in their community center, so the history of that struggle can reside in that building as a resource to that community where it came from. That's restorative—literally restorative. It means that history doesn't have to leave that building. It contains the chronicles the struggle—literally, with a thousand people in the street being clubbed and run over by horses—over that city block. That's kind of what we want to see happen.

Nadel-Hayes: The children of those activists are now working as interns on the restoration. That's not the only case of something like that happening: we did a program on the Coup in Chile for the 30-year anniversary and one of the people who worked on that program, her parents covered the Coup in 1973. Also, her grandfather, who was a poet that just recently passed, was very active in the scene and for the first time in her life she was able to hear a recording of her grandfather doing his own material. It's somewhat symbolic but it's real. It's not just an abstraction, it's a real thing that can happen. ¶ If we can make it happen here, somebody can make it happen somewhere else. It should happen *everywhere*. The Detroit Riots: create a center. Do it. Bring the children and their grandchildren, their nephews and nieces in of the people who died in Detroit in the urban rebellion and recreate that history. Find the artifacts. That's just the example on top. Alcatraz could be very different if the people who occupied it controlled how the story was being told. That in itself becomes restorative and radicalizing.

**The very act of retelling that story is profound.**

Marks: And now, the following generations have started telling it. ©





**F**or someone that has been involved with a number of highly influential bands, very little seems to be known about musician/artist Tara Jane O'Neil. Some of the mystery behind O'Neil is due to her personality; her solo work gives the impression that she is both highly introspective and still emotionally guarded. At the same time, it is impossible to overlook the fact that O'Neil is female in the male-centered world of independent music. Her track record in the indie scene is impeccable (stints in such important acts as Rodan, the Sonora Pine, and Retsin), yet her endeavors have never received the volume of press afforded her male counterparts. And while one interview does not revisionist history make, the work of O'Neil proves it's high time to offer a corrective to the accepted male-dominated narrative of underground music in the United States.

*Punk Planet* recently sat down with O'Neil to discuss not only her place in such a history, but also to talk about her activities in the here and now. Not surprisingly, O'Neil has much on her plate these days: touring behind the release of her latest solo album *In Circles*, attempting to find time to continue painting (a book of O'Neil's art was published in 2004 by Tokyo-based Map Press), and striving to push her music beyond the standard singer/songwriter sound. It is a lot for any one person to take on. But after speaking with her, it's clear that O'Neil will be just fine.

Interview by **Michael Carriere**

**You seem to have a gift for capturing that certain sense of wonder and innocence that often marks the experiences of adolescence and early adulthood. So I'm interested in your own**

**childhood: were you born and raised in Louisville? Did coming from such a place affect your development or outlook as an artist?**

I was moved around a lot as a kid: it was my training for the nomadic adulthood I've adhered to. I landed in Louisville for high school and that was where I started playing music. The town was and is pretty sleepy, so it was a good place to hide out for a few months and get stuff done. Old Louisville is the neighborhood where the "Rocket House" was, which is the most haunted place I've ever lived. That probably got into the development/outlook somewhere. I guess I'll always prefer a slow ride over the races.

**What was Louisville like as you came of age during the late 1980s/early 1990s? I picture it as more female-friendly than the other predominant scenes of that era. And more broadly, how have you managed to fit into a world that has forever been incredibly male-dominated?**

I was in a band called Drinking Woman. We were four women. There was one other band in town with a couple of ladies, but that was pretty much it. I was definitely supported by my friends and musical peers, but it was a total dude ranch. Things have changed some in that city and some other cities I've visited over the last 13 years, but I'm still amazed how certain scenes, labels, places, can't expand and get some gender and artistic diversity going on. I moved to New York when I was 21; that looked a lot more female than the Louisville scene. I'm on the West Coast now and the scene is full of men and women and people in between. It's a

good place for me to be. I sometimes forget what people still have to deal with in so many cities, being something other than a straight white bio male. It's hard to live in or respond to the "male-dominated" society. They used to call that society normal, but it's really not true.

**At the same time, your previous bands—Rodan, the Sonora Pine, and Retsin—were all critically acclaimed yet, for the most part, commercially ignored. Why do you think this was the case? And has such a response, or lack thereof, affected the way you approach music?**

I think the effect of all this is that I can't pretend to know and shouldn't think on how the music industry works. Energy spent on trying to figure out that stuff is energy taken away from what I'm actually here to do. It seems like it would be easier and more effective to try and find a benefactor. Today, I'm just excited to go on tour with Sir Richard Bishop and the Charalambides. They probably would fall in the same category. In the spring I did a tour with my friends Samara Lubelski and Michael Hurley. Us overlooked artists get to look to one another and really get turned on in a way that looking at your name on a chart doesn't. Still, a benefactor wouldn't be bad.

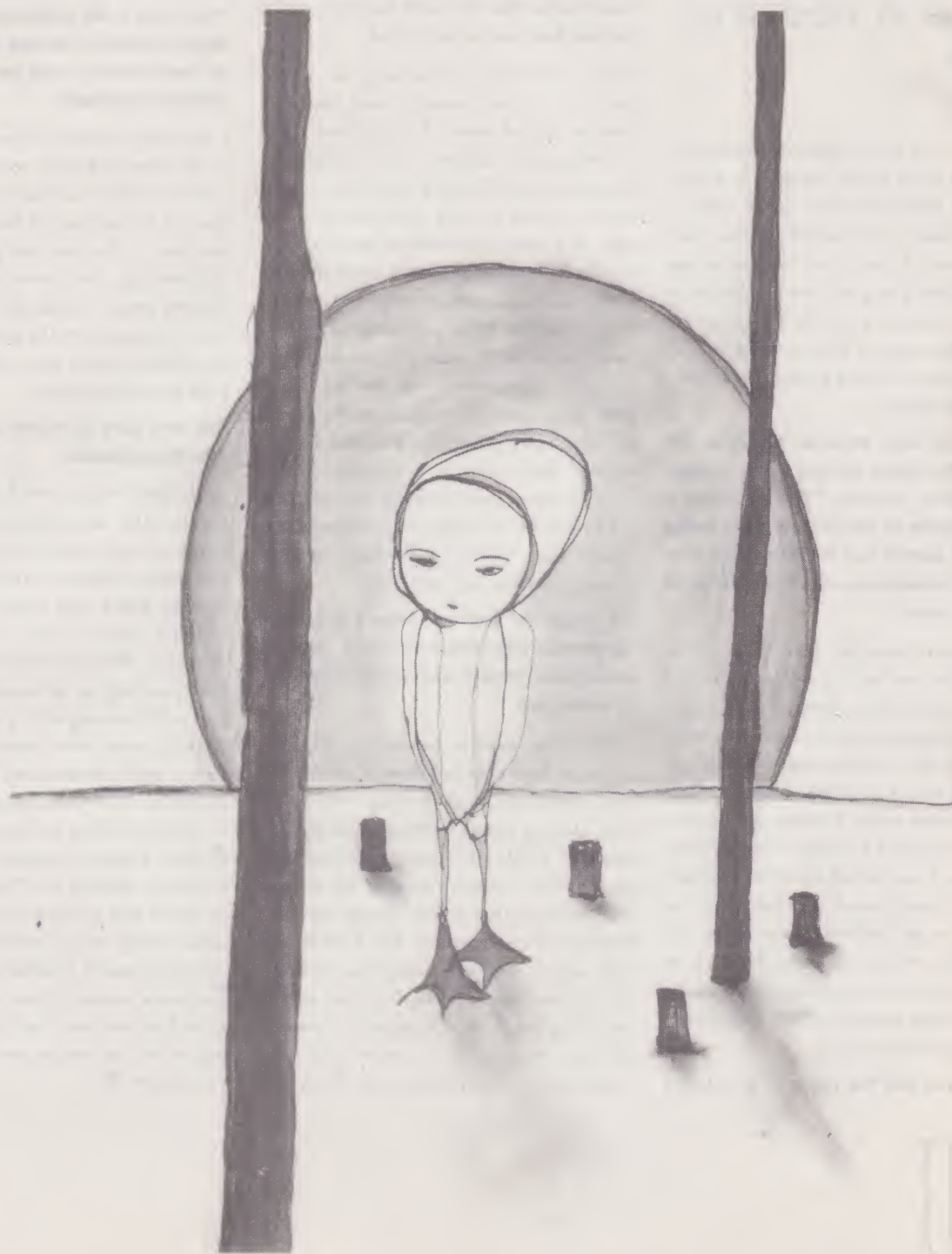
**What has played a role in your musical evolution from the days of Rodan to the present? You've obviously changed a great deal over the years, but I'm also curious if anything has remained a constant over this time period.**

When I started playing with those Rodan boys in Louisville I was 19. As my teen-

Tara Jane O'Neil  
Tara Jane O'Neil



“I guess I’ll always  
prefer a slow ride over  
the races...”



painting by Tara Jane O'Neil



Sometimes the artists need to take up the fight, and sometimes they need to create a resting place . . .

age self, I went to straight-edge shows and [Grateful] Dead shows, listened to Prince and Joni Mitchell, wrote songs akin to Leonard Cohen and played raucous bass in loud bands. I kind of do the same things now. I've been going on tour for the last 13 years and learned a lot. My functions are kind of the same as they ever were. The real difference is in my personal evolution and my intentions.

**Speaking of such personal evolution, I'm struck by the almost ethereal quality of many of the songs on "In Circles." The songs seem to float through the air and, in the process, create an aura of warmth and intimacy. What were the real-life experiences—if any—that inspired this set of songs?**

The experiences on the record come from my real life, my feeling and reaction and confusion and solitary hope. I guess songs can be the imprint left after someone walks in sand, or the stain in your eye after you look at the sun. It's not the foot or the light itself, but what it left behind. I'm not really reporting and I'm definitely not writing fiction. I am excited about the way music can be a magic wand. It's kind of like my drawings: songs and visuals can be an opportunity to escort the mundane parts of life into the exalted and sometimes fantastic realms. I'm not usually looking for grounding in my musical output.

**What do you feel the relationship between**

**your music—and perhaps the independent music scene more generally—and contemporary society should look like? There is a quote attributed to you and former bandmate Cynthia Nelson: Retsin gives the world a good time. We're not trying to prove diddly shit, we're just minding our business and making songs. Is that still your approach to music? Obviously, I ask this question with the tremendous trauma that the world has seen during the past five years or so in mind.**

Yeah, the world is traumatized. It has been since fires created a land mass and Pangea pulled apart. I think now there is definitely a different air circulating the globe and affecting everyone—maybe the air wasn't so rich with hell 10 years ago, or I wasn't available to that air. But societies have always been interested in violence. And sometimes the artists need to take up the fight, and sometimes they need to create a resting place or magic place for themselves and for others. It does seem true that culture really sparks the people into thinking and seeking and acting. Music can be a super-powerful tool. It completely changed my life. And I'd love to be so connected to what makes things work that I could write a song to end all madness and violence.

**I'm struck by how you balance traditional songwriting with instrumental and noise-oriented tracks. What do each of these approaches do for you?**

I think they used to be warring factions, but they have reached some kind of mutual compromise these days. When I'm not playing songs I write, I'm playing sounds. There isn't much recorded history of the "noisier" part of my sound-ing, though that might change soon. I feel like the last couple EPs I made and the new record are acceptable syntheses of these approaches. It's kind of like anything we do—each activity allows us things others don't. I love to cook, but sometimes I really like to sit down and

enjoy something someone else made, you know? Playing improvised sound stuff is a totally different experience for me than singing and playing guitar and making these songs I wrote happen. It's awesome to notice when I take the song someplace unexpected and find my way back, and it's awesome when a structure appears inside of a free-sound swarm.

**Then what is the relationship between your music and your art do they come from a similar creative source, or are they based on entirely different inspirations?**

I feel pretty lopsided after a tour and need to sit down and make some scratches on a surface. After months of scratching I get the itch for playing on the road again. I'm not sure if the two really have their own relationship. I've heard some people say that my music sounds like my art looks. It is all coming from the same source, finding different ways out, and different ways back in to this person.

**And what does the future hold for all of your assorted endeavors?**

Immediate future: finishing music for an independent documentary about Japanese balloon bombs and touring the west with Sir Richard Bishop and Charalambides. Staying home this winter and spending as much time as I can on paintings and drawings. Playing drums in a slow metal band, playing in an acoustic guitar duo, and collaborating with a noise group. I'll probably write some more guitar songs. I have a book of visual art slated to be released by Yeti Publishing in the spring, so I'll be working on that. Further along: finding a label to release my instrumental music, playing All Tomorrow's Parties in April and touring Europe. I wouldn't mind doing finger-painting classes with developmentally disabled adults. I'd like to find some source of income and maybe get a patch of land and build my environment out of cob structures and old train container cars. ©



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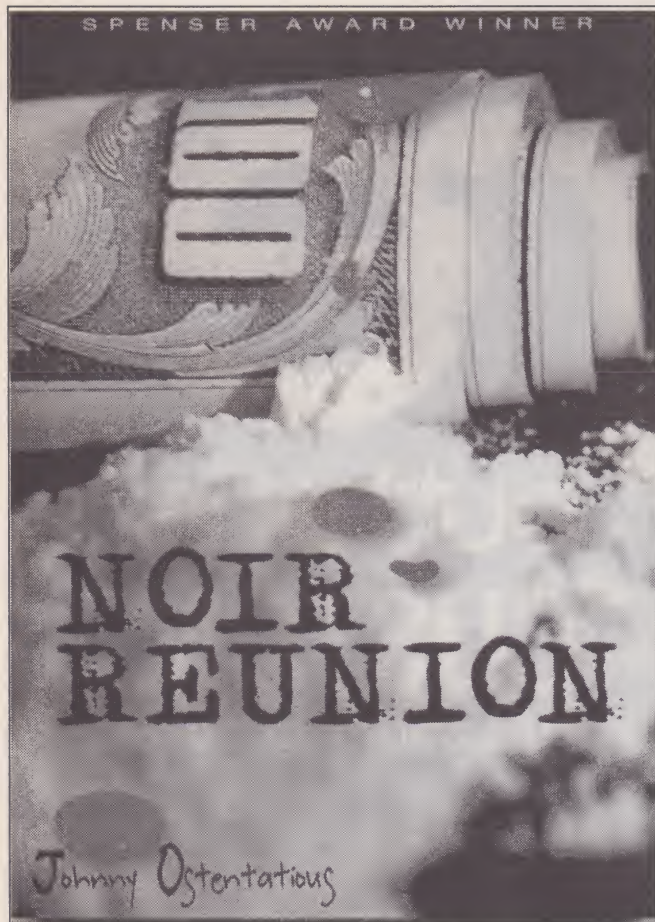
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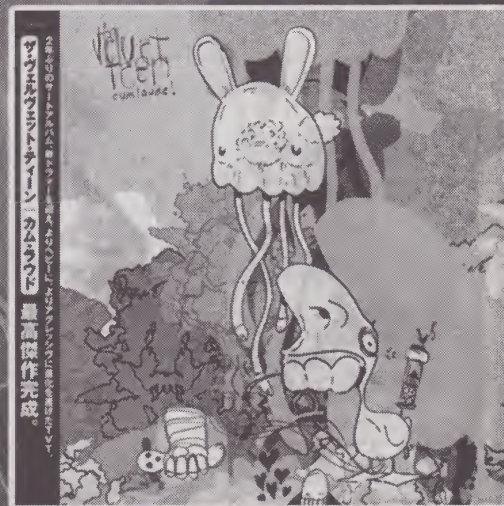
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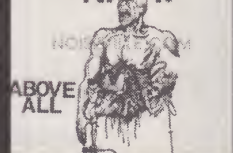


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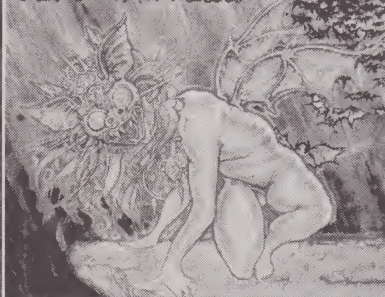
### INSIDE OUT NY

1993 Yellow Wax 7" press

Very Few Available NYHC 7"

\$7 pp in US \$10 outside US

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HWC012 - TUSK "GET READY" SPECIAL EDITION  
HWC011 - HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE "LOST IN LANDSCAPES"



# What's New For Fall

1. CURSIVE 08.22.06  
"HAPPY HOLLOW" CD/LP

SPIN and BLENDER  
gave this 4 stars,  
5 stars from A.P.  
EW gave it an A-

Heard they are  
coming to town.

\*\*check Saddle Creek  
site for tour dates\*



2. BRIGHT EYES 10.24.06 CD/2xLP  
"NOISE FLOOR (RARITIES: 1998-2005)"

Finally a collection  
of hard to find bright  
eyes tracks! Need  
to get this.

SADDLE CREEK

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# TOP

While most best-of-year lists stick to predictable topics like best records or books, we decided to open things up considerably and invite *Punk Planet* contributors, as well as folks from all walks of the underground, to come up with lists of 10 things they *truly* cared about during the last year. With lists from musicians, writers, label owners, comics artists, radio hosts, and tons more, the 25 pages of Top 10 lists that follow give a clear look into the psyche of the underground.

# 10



## TOP 10 ALBUMS OF 2006 (NO ORDER)

BY DAVE HOFER, PUNK PLANET  
REVIEWS EDITOR



1. The Lawrence Arms—*Oh! Calcutta!* (Fat)
2. Cannibal Corpse—*Kill* (Metal Blade)
3. Frightmare—

*Bringing Back the Bloodshed* (Razorback)

4. Mr. Lif—*Mo' Mega* (Def Jux)
5. Cretin—*Freakery* (Relapse)
6. Lair of the Minotaur—*The Ultimate Destroyer* (Southern Lord)
7. V/A—*Good God! A Gospel Funk Hymnal* (Numero Group)
8. Kashmere Stage Band—*Texas Thunder Soul 1968-1974* (Now Again/Fat Beats)
9. The Steinways—*Missed the Boat* (Cold Feet)
10. Dim Mak—*Knives of Ice* (Wiltlowtip)

## TOP 10 LPs I BOUGHT THIS YEAR THAT DIDN'T COME OUT THIS YEAR (A-G) (NO ORDER)

BY DAVE HOFER, PUNK  
PLANET REVIEWS EDITOR

1. Artifacts—*Between a Rock and a Hard Place*
2. Diamond—*Hatred, Passions, and Infidelity*
3. Eric B. & Rakim—*Follow the Leader*
5. The Casket Lottery—*Survival is for Cowards*
6. GZA—*Liquid Swords*
7. De La Soul—*De La Soul Is Dead*
8. Exit 13—*Ethos Musick*
9. Funkadelic—*Maggot Brain*
10. Deltron 3030—*S/T*



## MY TOP 10 RECORDS OF 2006 (INCLUDING ONES NOT RELEASED IN 2006)

BY ERIC GRUBBS, PUNK PLANET  
REVIEWER

Special note: Ranking records other than my utmost favorites in one particular year is difficult. Plus, I've never understood why people only rank records that came out that year. So, here's a rough estimate of my favorite records of 2006, with a definite Top 3 down below.

### 10. Death Cab for Cutie—*Plans*

With 2005's *Plans*, I was very guilty of passing this off as a timid retread. Not until I saw the *Directions* DVD in 2006 did the record click with me. Seeing it this way, I realized that *Plans* flows like a soundtrack, but a good soundtrack that stands on its own apart from the visuals.

### 9. Explosions in the Sky—*The Earth Is Not a Cold Dead Place*

Getting to review the *How Strange, Innocence* reissue for *Punk Planet* in late 2005, I rediscovered a band I originally tossed off as a Godspeed/Mogwai cousin. *Earth* is definitely more welcoming than their other records and it's their best so far.

### 8. Converge—*No Heroes*

2006 saw me get back into modern metal big time. I have always liked Metallica and Pantera, but I hadn't heard many modern metal bands that really blew me away for a long time. Along with Killswitch Engage and All That Remains,

Converge made me realize that not all things detuned and screamy have to be contrived angst-fests. Converge's previous record, *You Fail Me*, was in regular rotation in my CD player in

2006. When I heard *No Heroes* in October '06, I felt like the band had blown *You Fail Me* out of the water. Definitely a rawer record and not some easy regurgitation, *No Heroes* excels in its own ways.

### 7. The Paper Chase—*Now You Are One of Us*

Mixing tonal and atonal post-hardcore with pianos and strings along with audio clips from obscure horror films may sound like putting ice cream on pizza with a little bit of hot sauce. Thankfully, the end result isn't a ham-handed trainwreck. Along with Cursive, this is a band that sounds like what post-hardcore really

influenced instead of the kiddie-mall version.

### 6. Belle and Sebastian—*The Life Pursuit*

No matter how amazing Belle and Sebastian's subsequent records are, so many people brush them off as "Not as Good as *If You're Feeling Sinister*." *The Life Pursuit* is as good as their best stuff even if it is a little more electric and louder.

### 5. TV on the Radio—*Return to Cookie Mountain*

It's not every day that a record can remind me of both Prince and My Bloody Valentine, but that's not the sole reason why I like this record so much. Beneath the layers of falsetto vocals, wavy guitars, and effects lay some really tuneful songs that don't meander.

### 4. Neko Case—*Fox Confessor Brings the Flood*

With a voice that soothes as much as a hot shower does, Case's first proper album for Anti- is some of her best work to date. A crafty use of reverb opens the scope of the songs into something beyond just country, folk and gospel. Prior to hearing this record, I was more familiar with her material with the New Pornographers. Getting really into her solo material with this record, I tend to forget that she's that golden egg on songs like "Letter from an Occupant."

### 3. Secret Machines—*Ten Silver Drops*

Clocking in at 45 minutes with only eight tracks, *Ten Silver Drops* may sound like a disastrous journey through prog-rock excess. Instead, here's a record that doesn't try and overload your head with blasts of loud rock or mellow mush. Yes, there are a lot of layers of swirly keyboards, brittle guitars and subdued vocals here, but they are in mini-epics that don't feel like bloated epics.

### 2. Blackpool Lights—*This Town's Disaster*

The background on this band

sounds like a recipe for pure vanilla: former Get Up Kids member forms a band that plays songs in the vein of mid-period Replacements/early Westerberg solo. Regardless, these eleven songs are some of the catchiest songs I've heard all year long. The sing-along element to these songs (especially in the chorus) is what sells them, even if it sounds a little too polished for others.

### 1. Cursive—*Happy Hollow*

I wrote a few hundred words about this record in *Punk Planet* 76 and I'm sure I could write a few hundred more. Instead, I'll give you the Cliff Notes version. This record has a storyline, but there are no 13-minute self-important videos, graphic novels, bonus CDs or storybooks that try and tell the whole story. Questioning matters that are not questioned enough in the lyrics (like religion), Tim Kasher and Ted Stevens hit a number of homeruns. Plus, the music is as strong. Implementing a small horn section in a number of songs, there is a degree of dirty jazz involved with the dissonant Cursive sound you've come to know. Why is it top of my list? Because it's an album that has a beginning, middle and end. Sure, there are some songs that are better than others, but it's incredibly consistent.

## TOP 10 THINGS I READ IN 2006

BY SLIM MOON, FOUNDER, KILL  
ROCK STARS

1. *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*
2. *Middlemarch*
3. *Sister Carrie*
4. *Tess of the D'urbervilles*
5. *Little Women*
6. *The Once and Future King*
7. *The Koran*
8. *Sometimes A Great Notion*
9. *Madame Bovary*
10. *The Age of Innocence*

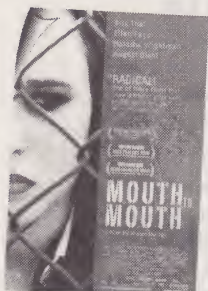




## TOP 10 MOVIES OF 2006

BY ART ETTINGER, PUNK PLANET REVIEWER AND THE MANAGING EDITOR OF THE HORROR MOVIE MAGAZINE ULTRA VIOLENT.

### 1. Mouth to Mouth



Director Alison Murray pulls no punches in *Mouth to Mouth*, the best wayward youth movie since *Romper Stomper*. The film stars Ellen Page of *Hard Candy* fame and is still searching for the audience it richly deserves.

### 2. The Night Listener

Despite starring Robin Williams, this bold and engaging thriller was a box office flop. It's one of the smartest mainstream horror films in years, and is definitely one to watch for on DVD.

### 3. The Quiet

Jamie Babbit, the director of *But I'm a Cheerleader*, took a major chance by directing this campy exploitation parody of suburban teenage rage. Another commercially mishandled gem from Sony Pictures Classics, *The Quiet* is the funniest film of 2006.

### 4. Wordplay

Even for those who find crosswords mundane, *Wordplay* is a fascinating look at those obsessed with the puzzles. Culminating in a national crossword competition, *Wordplay* remarkably brings entertainment to a seemingly boring subject.

### 5. The Heart is Deceitful Above All Things

When the discovery of the JT Leroy fraud flooded the media, it seemed as though Asia Argento's masterful Leroy adaptation was set for a wide art house release. Unfortunately, critics and audiences were so outraged by Leroy's nonexistence that this kick-ass film barely played theatrically.

### 6. Slither

Unlike the overly hyped-up *Snakes on a Plane*, *Slither* actually

delivers the goods. It's easily the greatest monster movie of the decade, overshadowing the overrated *Descent*.

### 7. The Notorious Bettie Page

Mary Harron's use of black and white photography for the majority of this biopic makes it the best-looking film of the year. It's not a plot-centered or character-centered work, but its visual excellence carries it through its short running time.

### 8. Wassup Rockers

Larry Clark goes punk with this outrageous and hilarious portrait of a group of hardcore kids from South Central Los Angeles. Arguably Clark's best film to date, *Wassup Rockers* is a blast from start to finish.

### 9. Tamara

The horror boom of the past 10 years allowed for limited theatrical screenings of this fun *Carrie* knockoff. Fans of female-centric revenge films won't want to miss it.

### 10. American Hardcore

Like the book it is based on, *American Hardcore* is flawed yet voraciously entertaining. Many punk viewers will find something in it to gripe about, but it's a must-see nonetheless.

## TOP 10 LP'S I BOUGHT THIS YEAR THAT DIDN'T COME OUT THIS YEAR (H-Z) (NO ORDER)

BY DAVE HOFER, PUNK PLANET REVIEWS EDITOR

1. Suffocation—*Despise the Sun EP*
2. Quicksand—*Manic Compression*
3. Raekwon—*Only Built 4 Cuban Linx*
4. Show & AG—*Goodfellas*
5. Slayer—*Seasons in the Abyss*
6. Velvet Underground, the—*S/T* (their third album)
7. The Pharcyde—*Labcabincalifornia*
8. INI—*Center of Attention*
9. Neurosis—*Times of Grace*
10. Los Natas—*Toba Trance*



## TOP 10 LIVE SHOWS THAT REINVIGORATED MY FAITH IN THE STATE OF MUSIC AND PEOPLE IN GENERAL, 2006

BY SARAH MOODY, PUNK PLANET REVIEWER

### 1. A Silver Mt Zion + Carla Bozulich—Neumos, Seattle

To me, ASMZ is the perfect band, or group, or whatever you'd like to call them, living up fully to the ideals that they put forth in their music. They came through Seattle on their first US tour, and I became witness to the most inspiring live show I've ever seen—microphones crowded around the center of the stage, Efrim's sharp comments, these huge compositions coming to life and offering a strange kind of hope. The evening ended with "The Triumph of our Tired Eyes"—few groups exist today

audience as "ladies and gentlemen" before going off on some widespread tangent. The more I see them live, the more respect I have for everyone involved in this group.

### 3. Dead Moon—Funhouse, Seattle

My first time being able to see Dead Moon and I knew halfway what to expect—the Jack Daniels candle, the three members pushing 60—but they blew everyone in that room out of the water for two hours straight, putting all younger bands to shame. One of the best moments was watching Andrew Loomis pour beer onto his drumhead, so that when he pounded it for "Dead Moon Night," the song became punctuated by beer flying straight up into the air. All three members are legends in their own right.



SLEATER-KINNEY, RIP

that can fill a room with that type of honest admiration.

### 2. Subtle + Fog + Jel—Neumos, Seattle

Whenever I'd heard Doseone on record, I assumed the vocals had been sped up during production, or some such trickery had been used—not so, apparently. Hearing him rap live is like listening to your favorite emcee on fast forward, only better. All members dressed in bright red, a huge lock with arms made up the background setting, and Dose stalked up and down the stage, full of color-coded props and constantly addressing the

### 4. Sleater-Kinney + The Thermals—Crystal Ballroom, Portland

SK's second to last show before going on "hiatus," with a near-perfect setlist. I've never been in a room so full of pure emotion and anticipation, with everyone there (band included) acknowledging that something they loved was ending.

### 5. Califone—Triple Door, Seattle

Playing in a seated theater with spotless acoustics, Califone put on an impeccable show. This was the first time I'd had a chance to see them live, and all three members owned that



room, filled it with their own technique and hypnotized everyone with each song. It was seamless, flawless as Rutilli's voice for two hours straight.

## 6. Man Man + n0 Things—The Velvet Spade, Austin

It was a full house for this show, with everyone packed in as tight as possible to catch Man Man's orgiastic carnival of a show. With Honus Honus and Pow Pow seated up front, they bellowed, cat-called, skyrocketed out of seats and stomped along, all followed by the squealy chorus of men-men behind them.

## 7. Jamie Lidell—The Gorge, George

This show eclipsed the one other time I'd seen Jamie live, if only for the fact that it was noon on a Sunday, bright outside, and he still drove everyone into a frenzy. Wearing the usual white leather shoes and gold robe, he was able to pull off his usual electro-shenanigans, recording and looping and layering until finally having enough to croon over—and when technical difficulties hit, he lounged onstage and sang accapella. Kind of perfect.

## 8. The Black Angels + Wooden Wand + Why? + My Brightest Diamond—Annex tent, Austin

As strange as those names may look together, this was by far the best showcase I saw at SXSW. Each group displayed such a unique sound, and all deserve so much respect for what the do—Why?'s set was particularly outstanding and drew the second biggest crowd that night.

## 9. Animal Collective—Neumos, Seattle

While most of the time was filled with the usual noodling, an incredible thing happened when they hit "We Tigers," with the entire sold-out room giving in and shouting along at the top of their lungs. Same goes for "Grass," with everyone just losing it and screaming together when the chorus hit, filling up the entire room.

## 10. Mt. Eerie + Thanksgiving—Old Redmond Firehouse, Redmond

Thanksgiving's set was a short one, and was moved indoors near the end so that the crowd could hear it better. Adrian Orange shepherded everyone inside, then danced backwards and pranced around in a circle while singing his songs—shouting loudly so everyone could hear—and finally getting everyone to sing with him. It was a kind of audience appreciation and participation that is hard to find these days. He earned all of my respect for making that happen.

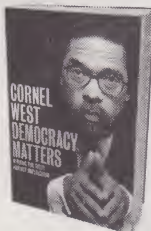
## 10 BOOKS I READ IN 2006—OR, PHRASES YOU MAY OR MAY NOT WANT TO USE WHEN BREAKING UP WITH SOMEONE

BY LAURA PEARSON, PUNK PLANET ASSOCIATE EDITOR

1. *Stranger Things Happen*, by Kelly Link

2. *For The Time Being*, by Annie Dillard

3. *Democracy Matters*, by Cornell West



4. *The Logic of Withdrawal*, by Anthony Arnone (full title: *Iraq: The Logic of Withdrawal*)

5. *The Good Times Are Killing Me*, by Lynda Barry

6. *Indecision*,

by Benjamin Kunkel

7. *My Most Secret Desire*, by Julie Doucet

8. *You Remind Me of Me*, by Dan Chaon

9. *Marriage: A History*, by Stephanie Coontz

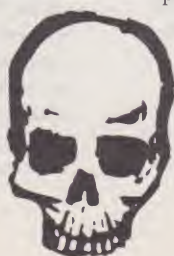
10. *The Quitter*, by Harvey Pekar & Dean Haspiel

## TOP 10 LPs I OWN WITH SKULLS ON THE FRONT (NO ORDER)

BY DAVE HOFER, PUNK PLANET REVIEWS EDITOR

1. Inept—*Images of Betrayal*

2. Nuclear Assault—*Survive*



3. Acrid—*86'ed*

4. Megadeth—*Killing is My Business . . . and Business is Good*

5. Combat Wounded Veteran—I Know a Girl Who Develops Crime Scene Photos

6. Bonnie "Prince" Billy—I See a Darkness

7. Cannibal Corpse—*The Wretched Spawn* (LP cover is different from the CD version)

8. Eyehategod—*Southern Discomfort*

9. Orchid—*Chaos is Me*

10. Sepultura—*Beneath the Remains*

## TOP 10 FULL LENGTHS OF 2006

BY DAN AGACKI, PUNK PLANET RECORD REVIEWER

1. Clockcleaner—*Nevermind*

Remember all those great records that came out on Touch and Go and Am Rep? This completely blows away 90% of those records. Saw 'em three times this year and it was mind blowing every time.

2. Mission Of Burma—*The Obliterati*

ONoffON was the warm up album. *The Obliterati* is Burma back at full strength. Burma proves that it's possible for a band to still be relevant over 20 years down the road.

3. Ahleuchatistas—*What You Will*

This record is the great unifier. Prog rock dorks, math rock weenies, free jazz dudes and SST Records enthusiasts can all come together over a love of this record.

4. Mika Miko—*CYSLABF*

It took some classics to beat out this masterpiece on my list. They combine two of my favorite sounds; LA circa '81 with late '70s/early '80s female British post punk.

5. Black Lips—*Let It Bloom*

Amazingly catchy songs and perfect harmonies. They are quite possibly the Rolling Stones of our time.

6. Government Warning—*No Moderation*

I made bold statements about the greatness of

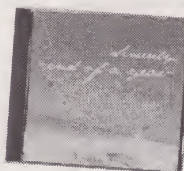
their 7". Luckily, they didn't spend their load on the 7" and had an entire album of equally great tunes waiting in the wings.

7. Scott Walker—*The Drift*

I used to think that Joy Division was creepy, but Scott Walker makes Joy Division sound like children's songs.

8. End Of A Year—*Sincerely*

A year ago I wouldn't have expected to be listing an album that Revelation put out in my Top 10, but here it is, against all odds. Stop comparing them to Rites Of Spring. Swiz is a little more on target. Great album and great dudes.



9. Protestant—*Make Peace With The Rope You Hang From*

The sound of a post-apocalyptic world. Intelligent and diverse hardcore done properly.

10. Hue Blanc's Joyless Ones—*Fait Accompli*

The Algoma all-star band channels first album era Modern Lovers. The multi-drummer attack pounds these songs into your brain.

## TOP 10 SONGS I LISTENED TO NON-STOP THAT WERE RELEASED IN 2006

BY HEATHER WHINNA, FILMMAKER, INDEPENDENT PROMOTER

1. Nina Nastasia—"We Never Talked"

2. Danielson Famile—"Did I Step On Your Trumpet?"

3. Silkworm—"Wrote A Song For Everyone" (written by John Fogerty)

4. Bottomless Pit—"Human Out Of Me"

5. Dolly Parton—"Travelin' Thru"

6. El Perro Del Mar—"God Knows (You Gotta Give To Get)"

7. Joanna Newsom—"Emily"

8. Nina Gordon—"Superstar"

9. The Evens—"You Won't Feel A Thing"

10. Magnolia Electric Co—"Don't Fade On Me"



**TOP 10 BANDS OF 2006  
THAT MOST PEOPLE WILL  
PRETEND THEY NEVER  
LIKED THIS TIME NEXT  
YEAR, IF THEY EVEN ADMIT  
TO IT NOW**

BY MATT SIBLO, PUNK PLANET  
REVIEWER

1. Art Brut  
"We're a sham! We're a sham!  
Look at us, we're a sham!"
2. Margot & the Nuclear So So's  
By sheer name alone, I'd say  
they have a life expectancy of  
six months.
3. Lily Allen  
'Nuff said.
4. Someone Still Loves You,  
Boris Yeltsin  
See explanation  
for #2.
5. The Arctic Monkeys  
This might have al-  
ready happened. A  
long time ago.
6. Sunn O)))  
The Darkness of sludge  
metal.
7. The Pipettes  
I'll admit I bought the album,  
but I calls them as I sees them.
8. Tapes n' Tapes  
"I am a tastemaker and I do not  
taste your tapes n' tapes."
9. OK Go  
I'm pretty sure this band will  
be all out of gimmicks by next  
year but they've proven me  
wrong in the past.
10. Panic! At the Disco  
You can't blame me for taking  
one cheap shot.

**ART CHANTRY'S TOP 10  
THRIFT STORE SINGLES  
FOUND IN 2006 (EVERY  
ONE A ROCKER—WELL,  
SORTA). MY MOTTO:  
"NEVER PAY MORE THAN  
TWO BITS"**

BY ART CHANTRY, DESIGN LEGEND

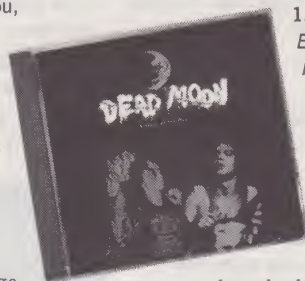
1. The Inn Crowd—*The Shadow  
Laughs*
2. Kit & The Outlaws—*Don't Tread  
On Me*
3. Mercy—*Fire Ball*
4. Chuck Bridges & The LA Hap-  
pening—*Bad Sam*

5. M Kric—*Justifiable Homicide*
6. The Balloon Farm—*A Question  
Of Temperature*
7. The Converters—*Dave's Place*
8. Clyde Stacy & The Nitecaps—*So  
Young*
9. The Wild Ones—*Come On Back*
10. The Fallen Angels—*A Little  
Love From You Will Do*
- (11. Beatnik George—Bobby & Billy)

*P.S.—The hard part was limiting it to 10  
(as you can see)*

**TOP 10 ALBUMS FOR 2006**

BY JOEL SCHALIT, MANAGING  
EDITOR, TIKKUN



1. Dead Moon—*Echoes of the  
Past* (Sub Pop)  
Portland's  
longest-run-  
ning power  
trio since  
the Wipers  
turns 19  
and issues  
a breathtaking 2xCD ac-  
count of their entire career.

2. Burial—*Burial* (Hyperdub)  
Equal parts Pole and Basic  
Channel, London's *Burial* fi-  
nally puts dubstep on the full-  
length map with a gorgeous,  
reverb-laden masterpiece.
3. Wolf Eyes/Anthony Braxton—  
*Black Vomit* (Victo)  
In the year's most inspired  
pairing, the two most au-  
cument proponents of noise-im-  
prov testify to their genre's  
limitless boundaries.

4. The Congos and Friends—  
*Fisherman Style* (Blood and Fire)  
Using the backing track to the  
Congo's 1977 hit "Fisherman,"  
Rhythm & Sound edit and mix  
their own history of roots reg-  
gae featuring a dizzying collec-  
tion of classic MCs.

5. The Country Teasers—  
*The Empire Strikes Back* (In the Red)  
Humor and politics don't  
always qualify as the most  
memorable musical mix, but  
when they do, this notoriously  
irreverent UK garage band to-  
tally nails it.

6. Razor X Productions—*Killing  
Sound* (Rephlex)

Bringing out the punk in  
dancehall, ex-Techno Animal  
member Kevin Martin tears  
the roof off with this moun-  
tain-moving blast of beat  
concrete.

7. Dir Yassin—*Discography* (Alerta  
Antifascista)

Collecting unreleased tracks  
and long out of print 7-inches  
on one LP, Israel's answer to  
Crass gets its appropriately  
ironic due—on a German  
HC label.

8. Boris—*Pink* (Southern Lord)  
Synthesizing doom rock, shoe-  
gazer and drone, with *Pink*,  
critical darlings Boris rede-  
fined indie rock for a whole  
new generation.

9. The Coup—*Pick a Bigger  
Weapon* (Epitaph)

Nearly six years after  
their ill-fated Party  
Music LP, Boots and  
Pam return with  
their most incisive  
and confrontation-  
al album yet.

10. Crisis—*Holocaust  
Hymns* (Apop)

Recorded between 1978 and  
1980, this anthology of Marx-  
ist post-punk by future mem-  
bers of Sol Invictus and Death  
in June still sounds frighten-  
ingly relevant.

**TOP 10 "DEAD" BANDS  
SENT TO OCTOBER FOR  
REVIEW IN 2006**

BY JAKE AUSTIN, OCTOBER  
FANZINE

1. Dead Brothers—*Wunderkam-  
mer* (Voodoo Rhythm)
2. Dead C Vain—*Stupid and Eru-  
dite: Selected Works 1987-2005*  
(Ba Da Bing!)
3. Dead Disco (Fierce Panda)
4. Dead Heart Bloom (Kei)
5. Dead Hooker's Bridge Club—*The  
Hoo Dee Hoo* (New Art School)
6. Dead Man (Crusher)
7. Dead Moon—*Echoes of the Past*  
(Sub Pop)
8. Dead Next Door—*Time To Fight*

(Prison Records)

9. The Dead Science—*Frost Giant*  
(Absolutely Kosher)
10. Dead To Me—*Cuban Ballerina*  
(Fat)

**TOP 10 RECORDS I  
REVIEWED (OR SHOULD  
HAVE REVIEWED) IN 2006**

BY JUSTIN VELLUCCI, PUNK  
PLANET REVIEWER

1. Clogs—*Lantern*

An almost sublime offering  
from a quartet that blurs the  
lines between classical compo-  
sition and post-rock experi-  
mentalism without cranking  
out songs that feel over-cooked  
or over-analyzed. The hushed  
silences from the audience  
that watched them open up  
for Rachel's in New York City  
in 2006 said it all: this sound  
engulfs you.

2. Bonnie  
"Prince" Billy—  
*The Letting Go*  
Will Oldham  
adds another  
gem to the Pal-  
ace stable with  
what might be his  
finest outing in  
years, a 12-song

set marrying the studio-re-  
fined precisions of *Sings Great-  
est Palace Music* with the tender  
acoustic refrains that have  
captivated listeners from *Days In  
The Wake* right up through *Master  
and Everyone*.

3. STNNG—*Dignified Sissy*

An incredible disc from a group  
that doesn't write songs as much  
as it plots explosions. Blister-  
ing, borderline-apocalyptic  
punk with lyrics as bizarrely  
literate as they are incendiary.  
You must find this record.

4. The Lesser Birds of Paradise—  
*Space Between*

Mark Janka and company fol-  
low up *String of Bees* with a disc  
that's even more fragile and  
aching than its predecessor. If  
the whispered folk of "I Envy  
The Photons" doesn't break  
your heart, Tim Joyce's piano-  
laced take on "You Are My  
Sunshine" definitely will.



## 5. Don Caballero—*World Class Listening Problem*

You know the storyline: thunderous Pittsburgh math-rock outfit releases critically lauded catalog, goes silent during lengthy hiatus, reunites for new record with only one original member. The result? An unexpected return to form. It's no Don Caballero 2, sure, but it's pretty damn good.

## 6. Calexico—*Garden Ruin*

I know, I know, it's not *The Black Light*. Then again, what is? Joey Burns and John Convertino crank up the radio-readiness on their desert rock and Latin-tinged acoustic ballads and the outcome still captivates you.

## 7. Tris McCall & The New Jack Trippers—I'm Assuming You're All In Bands

Synth-pop as satire and social commentary. Jersey native Tris McCall toys with a rougher-around-the-edges live sound to punch holes in Brooklyn's hipster scene. If you swear this record's not about you, it just might be.

## 8. Jack Endino—*Permanent Fatal Error*

This Skin Yard alumnus/Seattle studio guru's first solo outing in years is all the proof you'll need that the Pacific Northwest still understands the vitality of grungy guitars and distortion-drenched choruses.

## 9. The Sea, Like Lead—S/T EP

A quietly released EP that could be one of the year's better debuts: a three-song demo whose long-form post-rock exercises call to mind early June of 44 and the tangled eruptions of A Minor Forest.

## 10. The Vanities—*Coma Kiss*

A local band comes into its own. After a few records and a few years, this studio-polished quartet—part At The Drive In, part Mr. Bungle, part Nirvana—sounds like it's teetering on the big time. Catch them before the cover price at the door climbs skyward along with them.

## TOP 10 BOOKS I READ IN 2006 (REGARDLESS OF THEIR RELEASE DATE)

BY HEATHER WHINNA, FILMMAKER, INDEPENDENT PROMOTER

1. *Call Me Crazy*, by Anne Heche (amazing on CD)
2. *Persepolis, Persepolis 2, Embroideries*, by Marjane Satrapi
3. *Silent Twins*, by Marjorie Wallace
4. *Comfort and Critique*, by Peter Sotos
5. *Angry Little Girl* series, by Lela Lee
6. *The Encyclopedia Of Unbelief*, edited by Gordon Stein
7. *Bad Date*, by Trevor Greene



8. *Female Sexual Abuse Of Children*, edited by Michelle Elliott

9. *Exuberance: The Passion for Life*, by Kay Redfield Jamison

10. *Singing Songs*, by Meg Tilly

## TOP 10 THINGS I OVERHEARD AT MUSIC FUNCTIONS THIS YEAR

BY KYLE RYAN, PUNK PLANET CONTRIBUTOR, EDITOR FOR THE UNION AV CLUB

10. "I think Mike's talking shit about us, but I can't tell." [Laughs.]

—Tim McIlrath of Rise Against backstage at Warped Tour, waiting for NOFX to finish so his band could start. Parc Jean Drapeau, Montreal, 8/13/06

9. "Ben Gibbard makes cute hipster girls pathetic."

—Guy's homemade T-shirt at Lollapalooza. Grant Park, Chicago, 8/4/06

8. "Janet! I love you! AAAAAAAH-HHHHHHH! All night! All night!"

—Guy during Sleater-Kinney's set at Lollapalooza. Grant Park, Chicago, 8/4/06

7. "It's a little known fact that our time signatures are more fucked up than Coheed & Cambria's. So if you want to clap along, good fucking luck to you."

—Carl Newman of the New Pornographers at Lollapalooza. Grant Park, Chicago, 8/5/06

6. "I have a bit of a cameltoe going on right now. Just don't take a picture."

—Neko Case. Antone's, Austin, 3/18/06

5. "That didn't just happen, did it? I can't believe that just happened!"

—Random kid after Lifetime played. Emo's, Austin, 3/17/06

4. "That's what South By Southwest is all about: moving units, making connections. And eyeliner."

—Dan Yemin of Paint It Black. Emo's, Austin, 3/18/06

3. Drunk guy: "Dude, when I flew to Baltimore, [Neko Case] was in *American Way* magazine! You know what that means, don't you? It's all over!"

[Pause.]

His friend: [Laughs.] "I'm driving you home."

—Exchange during Neko Case set. Antone's, Austin, 3/18/06

2. "I think the qualities that make him an asshole also make him a good lead singer."

—Two band dudes discussing their jerky vocalist during lunch. Schlotzsky's, Austin, 3/17/06

1. "I know what you're thinking: What was the big deal? It was a lot cooler in the '80s."

—Steve Albini during Big Black's set at the Touch & Go 25th anniversary festival. Hideout, Chicago, 9/9/06

## TOP 10 SONGS I LISTENED TO NON-STOP IN 2006 THAT WERE NOT RELEASED IN 2006

BY HEATHER WHINNA, FILMMAKER, INDEPENDENT PROMOTER

1. Don Heffington—"Don't Fade On Me"

2. Harry Nilsson—"Think About Your Troubles"

3. Randy Newman—"Political Science"

4. Jimmy Cliff—"Many Rivers To Cross"

5. Jill Sobule—"Don't Let Us Get Sick" (written by Warren Zevon)

6. Robbie Fulks—"Georgia Hard"

7. Willie Nelson & Johnny Cash—"Always On My Mind" (live)

8. John Lennon—"God" (from the Anthology set)

9. The Langley Schools Music Project—"Desperado"

10. Leslie Gore—"You Don't Own Me"

## TOP 10 COMIC BOOKS I'VE ACQUIRED IN THE LAST YEAR THAT I WISH I HAD TIME TO READ

BY BRETT WARNOCK, TOP SHELF COMIX

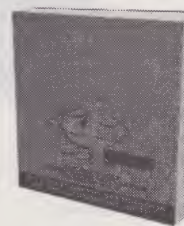
1. *Buddha Vol. 8*, by Tezuka. Published by Vertical.

(Actually, haven't read ANY of them yet.)

2. *Marvel Zombies*, by Robert Kirkman and Sean Phillips. Published by Marvel.

3. *Fun Home*, by Alison Bechdel. Published by Houghton Mifflin.

4. *Sloth*, by Gilbert Hernandez. Published by Vertigo / DC.



5. *Wimbledon Green*, by Seth Green. Published by Drawn & Quarterly.

6. *Love Fights*, by Andi Watson. Published by Oni Press.

7. *The Surrogates*, by Robert Venditti and Brett Weldele. Published by ME!!!

8. *Night Fisher*, by R. Kikuo Johnson. Published by Fantagraphics.

9. *The Dark Horse Book of the Dead*, edited by Scott Allie. Published by Dark Horse.

10. *Vampire Loves*, by Joann Sfar. Published by First Second.

## TOP 10 LEAST COMFORTABLE CHIC-A-GO-GO RAT PUPPET INTERVIEWS OF 2006

BY JAKE AUSTIN, OCTOBER FANZINE

1. Lady Sovereign

Walked away before interview.

2. The Streets

Walked away one second into interview.

3. David Thomas of Pere Ubu

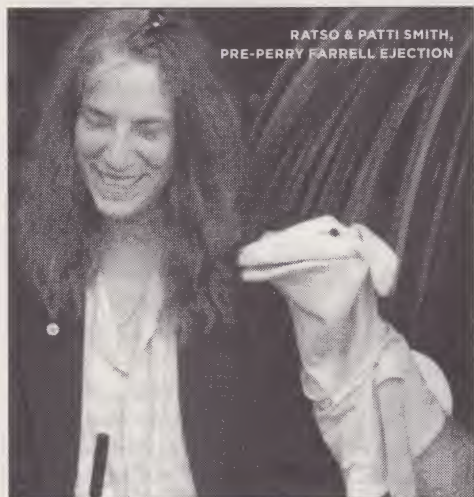
Insulted the puppet for his poor craftsmanship.

4. Animal Collective



In their defense, maybe they were just being really serious.

5. Gil Manteras' Party Dream  
Was disappointed with Lil' Ratso's poor research skills.
6. Lorna Logic  
Stood off camera and laughed at the rest of the Germs during their interview.
7. CSS  
Brazilian dance rockers may or may not have been comfortable, but they were definitely drunk.
8. One of the kids from the Paul Green School of Rock  
Too cool for puppets.
9. Budget Girls  
Were actually quite comfortable, but made Ratso uncomfortable with their sexy innuendo.



10. Perry Farrell  
Had security remove the puppet, puppeteer, and cameraman during a pleasant interview with Patti Smith at Lollapalooza.

#### TOP 10 MOST LISTENED TO SONGS OF 2006, ACCORDING TO MY COMPUTER

BY PAUL M DAVIS, PUNK PLANET CONTRIBUTOR AND VOLUNTEER

1. Traditional—"Bugger Off"
2. Bob Seger—"Turn The Page"
3. Merle Haggard—"Okie From Muskogee"
4. Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson—"I Can Get Off On You"

5. Killdozer—"Free Love in Amsterdam"
6. Old Crow Medicine Show—"I Hear Them All"
7. Bonnie "Prince" Billie—"Ignition" (R. Kelly Cover)
8. The Thermals—"Returning To the Fold"
9. Caexico—"All Systems Red"
10. The Devil Makes Three—"Judgment Day"

#### TOP 10 CONCERTS I MISSED IN 2006, GODDAMMIT

BY JON RESH, DESIGNER/WRITER

1. TV On The Radio  
I've managed to miss seeing this band live four times now, which should indicate just how much I suck as a human being.
2. Say Hi to Your Mom

I was cranky and tired, it was rainy and cold outside, and I had just rented Spike Lee's *Inside Man*. So I stayed home and watched the movie. It was quite entertaining.

3. Bad Brains at CBGB's  
I had no clue this was going on for CBGB's closing festivities. Had I known I probably would've hopped a ride to NYC for it, even if HR & Co.

are (in all probability) withered old coots by now.

4. Mucca Pazza  
Took a nap beforehand. Woke up at four the next morning. Gaaaaah.
5. Asobi Seksu  
Mom was in town. She expressed no interest in standing before a deafening shoegazer roar topped with frosty Japanese female vocals. Our loss.
6. Arcwelder  
At the Touch & Go/Hideout fest, they played first—i.e., noon—on the Sunday after two full days of rock. It was

a gray and cold noon show, and all of us were beat to shit from the previous 36 hours. We got down there by 3 pm, wholly missing Arcwelder's set, though in hindsight we really should've made the effort. Sorry guys.

7. Fred Anderson & Hamid Drake  
Two of the best and most innovative musicians in the nation happen to live in my town (Chicago), but I'm rarely alerted to their collaborative performances. And whenever they do play together, invariably I'm on deadline. Crap.
8. Iron & Wine  
Couldn't stomach the Lollapalooza ticket price. Plus I'd rather see Mr. Beam in a more intimate setting—like our laundry room. How about it, Sam?
9. Explosions in the Sky.  
This would've necessitated a trip to Austin, which I would've been up for . . . except I didn't have the cash or a car or airline credit or a place to stay or time to go. (That, of course, wouldn't have stopped me when I was 19.)
10. The Raveonettes.  
Stayed home for any myriad of lame reasons; can't remember which one. A good *Simpsons* was on or something.

#### 10 BOOKS THAT TRULY INSPIRED ME THIS YEAR. SOME JUST HAVE PHOTOS OR ART, OTHERS HAVE WORDS

BY CHRISSEY PIPER, PHOTOGRAPHER

1. *Confederates in the Attic*, by Tony Horwitz
2. *Ireland: A Terrible Beauty*, by Jill and Leon Uris
3. *American Pictures*, by Jacob Holdt  
An amazing photographer and his story
4. *Aiz/Vi 1930-38*, by John Heartfield  
Everyone should know this guy's art, especially with our current president, it's all so relevant
5. *Facts Of Winter*, by Paul Poissel

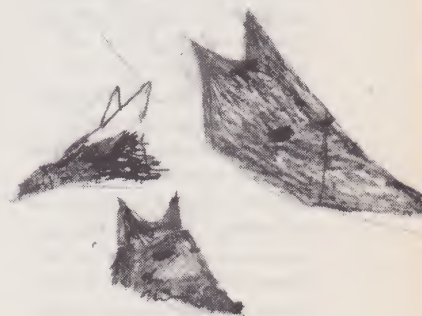
and Paul La Farge

6. *When I Was Five I Killed Myself*, by Howard Buten  
My Favorite Book, gets me every time I read it . . . really makes one think of children in a different light.
7. *The Feast Of Love*, by Charles Baxter
8. *Hundred And One Days*, by Asne Seierstad  
One dedicated woman!
9. *An Anthropologist On Mars*, by Oliver Sacks
10. *Risk Of An Early Spring*, by Bertrand Fleuret

#### TOP 10 BANDS OF 2006 THAT ARE REALLY, REALLY INTO WOLVES

BY MICHAEL COLEMAN, FOUNDATION PROJECTS

1. Wolfmother
2. Wolfmother
3. Wolfmother
4. Wolfmother
5. Wolfmother  
They get five spots on the list because they're also really, really into themselves.
6. Wolf Parade
7. Wolf Eyes
8. Sea Wolf
9. Guitar Wolf
10. Steppenwolf  
OK, no real buzz for Steppenwolf in 2006, but they're my prediction for 2007's shouldn't-really-have-both-ered-to-make-a-come-back-but-are-pissed-about-not-riding-the-wolf-bandwagon-in-2006 band.





## 10 ZINES FOUND IN 2006

BY R JOHN XERXES,  
LOVE BUNNI PRESS

*Inspiration and motivation have become increasingly rare commodities in a scene that has become rife with calls-for-content and disappearing acts that remind one of a spiritualist heckled by a distraught mommy-missing Houdini. Of course, the zine community has not succumbed to the pratfall pranksterism of the underground music scene—meaning that there are hardly the sad number of zines out there with a sole purpose of pandering to the majors, creating product instead of expression. Zinedom has lost, though, to the chilling warmth of MySpace invites and other such damn social networking immediacies. The electronic eye has drained enough of the intimacy away from the graceful tide of slow-motion readership. Anyway, there were some things that came across my desk this last year that provoked, enthralled and prodded me toward my own productions—and that is what it's all about, I think.*



1. **R Lee's *Barrelhouse* and *Underworld Crawl*** (dollar bills or trades to P.O. Box 1421 Oshkosh, WI 54903)

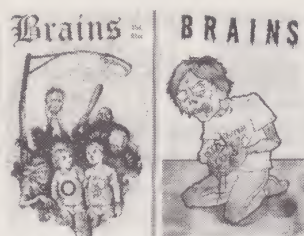
R Lee is, quite frankly, the best writer you are likely to read. *Barrelhouse* is less a comic book and more a beautifully illustrated picture book for adults. Each issue is a self-contained tale, possibly autobiographical confessions, centered around a mounting pile of shit and failure. *Underworld Crawl* continues to tap the same bruised vein of hope, a hope unalterably torn asunder by the stupid brutality of normal everyday banality. While R Lee seems to be boiling his work in familiar, uninteresting pots, do not be dissuaded. His narrative voice is one of stripped observation, acutely incensed to descriptive tone, event, and location.

His writing is conversational without the insufferable do-nod boredom droning on in the background as one tries to pass out. R Lee's writing is controlled, subtle, and powerful. His observations are quick cutting. His talent soars as he painfully refashions a despised population, unsympathetically attributing to them all the unanticipated pathos and inexplicable comradery inherent in all great works of prose. R Lee is a rare find in the underground; he's a true "author" with all the rights and privileges afforded to the position.

2. ***Paper Kitty*** (contact e-mail: [paperkitty@gmail.com](mailto:paperkitty@gmail.com))

Frankly, I am totally smitten with this wonderful little zine. The collaboration of cousins, Viet and Jackie, this zine is brilliantly designed and incredibly executed. On the cover is a brown lunch bag hand puppet whose arms pop-up off the surface, who's breast plate opens for easy battery replacements, and who's mouth swings open to reveal the sleepy bear operator cosily operating the giant robot. The beauty, detail, and painstaking construction of the front cover informs the entire project.

Each page explodes with a brilliant intricacy of hand written text interrupted by big-headed cuteness. The cartoon creatures dance among the text with a gleeful, unabashed playfulness that is intoxicating. The sustained quality of the illustrations and page design, done by Viet, is wholly unexpected and unprecedented in a photocopied creation. The zine is also fun to read. There are delightful interviews with friends and artists, fully illustrated as cartoons. And probably my favorite piece of zine invention right now, "I Met Him When He Was 5," a cute little narrative by a child's stuffed bear. *Paper Kitty* is rare and special zine because it is a zine of pure, infectious, unadulterated joy.



3. ***Brains*** (<http://brains.zine.googlepages.com/home>)

*Brains* basically combines two great genres that have always stood side by side in an unholy trash culture alliance—punk rock and zombies! These two have stood together since before The Damned went all horrogoth on us. Skulls and decaying corpses were the high art, the defining symbols, in the employ of almost all punk bands until the advent of straightedge (or when Pushead started designing Metallica albums, who can say for sure). But this zine picks up where the grand tradition of the Misfits, 45 Grave, and Return of the Living Dead all slouched off. Both issues, so far, straddle the kitsch abyss of bad punk and bad horror with a Russian gymnast's unnatural agility. Infusing the stories with an intimate knowledge of punk's history and the undead's mythologies, the myriad genres and absurd subtitles of each are exploited for maximum effect. Utilizing humor to defuse any potential awfulness, these stories are clever and inventive and genuinely enjoyable to read. Underground splatter horror and punk fiction have notoriously been humiliating experiences, but Jesse & Ryan great writers, who's obvious talent has been focused on an inspired project. The fun they had in making these zines is translated to the reader guaranteeing a great time for all.

4. ***Fifth Grade*** (stamps/trade Love Bunni Press, 2622 Princeton Cleveland, OH 44118)

While Ben Frazier was designing the interior graphics for the short story collection *Blister Packs*,

he stumbled over a computer generated distorting technique that allowed him to manipulate photographs. The result of this procedure rendered the images grotesquely misshapen and humorously recognizable. A perfect opportunity presented itself when he remembered a zine idea he kicked around based on a ragtag grade school yearbook. That strangely inconsequential document survived the terrors of the years gouging past. A sad monument to the last grade where one can still be a child—before the full-blown rage of hormones and the concealing smear of underarm deodorant. So he tinkered and tricked out the little square portraits, then accented the images with cramped up memories and no punches pulled observations. The result of his handiwork is simultaneously saccharin reflections and wistful annoyance, the true stuff of unfettered memories. *Fifth Grade* stands at the rusty banister of a parking lot precipice frowning like a gassy hall monitor, dreading the lunch bell. The spectacle is alien while the participants familiar. It's that good.

5. ***Razorcake*** (PO Box 42129 LA, CA 90042)

Todd and the gang have always produced *Razorcake* from that sticker-strewn, messy attic bedroom where piles of great punk rock records manage to block out the sun. The zine has always felt like a long conversation with that one kid in the scene who had the most awesome record collection. That kid who made weekly treks across the filthy city, progressively and ritualistically, hitting every indie record store. That kid would buy vinyl by the pound, especially by bands with the most fucked-up logos and cover art. That kid who was the conduit through which great and obscure bands became celebrated in local scenes across the country. I always liked that kid because he would always welcome you into his



lair, to sit for hours listening and talking and enthusing about the bands he was dubbing for you. *Razorcake* is that kid and as the staff grows and the magazine expands, the love that is shared through its pages is real and it is deep. And magazines like it are what keeps this underground shitfest fun and worthwhile. Thank the fucking gods for *Razorcake*!



**6. *What I Did On My Summer Vacation* (\$20 to Christoph Meyer PO Box 106, Danville, OH 43014)**

The first paperback book produced by Ye Olde Printe Shoppe. YOPS promises to become one of the best DIY presses in the history of DIY presses mainly because of the dedication of its founder—Christoph Meyer. You might recognize him as the antiquarian force behind *28 Pages Lovingly Bound with Twine*. If you have not actually met him at a zinefest, sitting at his table carefully knotting twine, then surely you have read his warm and affectionate zines. His zine has long been a favorite and I proudly call him a friend, so imagine my surprise and joy when I discovered this magnificent paperback book in my pile of mail. This charming tale of the Meyer's family excursion from Cleveland to Portland to attend the 2005 zine symposium is so affably written that one whips through the 162 pages without noticing the time. But this will be no surprise to fans of Christoph's honed storytelling ability. Nor will the reader familiar with *28 Pages*... be surprised to discover handmade gems of punched paper, photographs, and hand stamped graphics littering and punctuating the book. *What I Did on My Summer Vacation* is completely handmade—collated, cut, and bound entirely by Christoph—and the resulting book is unlike

any other book you are likely to have seen outside a museum. It is an amazing artefact, an impressive testament, to the DIY aesthetic and should be added to every collection.

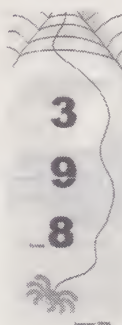
**7. *Wild Style On The Stone Age & More X Out More Index* (\$1. Alejandro de Acosta, 5002 Baker St. Austin TX 78721)**

Anathemas and admirations penned by the brilliant Alejandro de Acosta. Focusing on the struggles for autonomy, these observations offer potential pin pricks into the social fabric that shrouds philosophy in constrictive academic pleather jumpsuits. Alejandro's notes and prose poems are wonderful. The sparse insights fuse an anarcho-marxism to the livable surface of everyday tedium. The result is an explosive event that tears open new avenues for general thought and locates associations/friendships as sites for revolutionary struggle and potential liberation. The pattern offered is experimental art and generosity, essential tools in staving off tyranny. These zines are important transmissions from the front lines of everyday life. Highly accessible, readable, and recommended.

**8. *A Book Of Tiny Paintings & Rough Sketches* (\$12 through <http://www.ericdavison.com>)**

A skinny, but breathtakingly beautiful, collection of color plates and black and white sketch pad pages, Eric's art book is really well produced. Basically, a collection of Eric's watercolor portraits of inventively designed monsters and cartoonish man-on-the-street caricatures. While some influences occasionally poke through the soft palate and strong line of Eric's paintings, what is clear is that he is developing an exactly defined visual style. Whether straightforward illustration or cluttered assemblage of overlapping figures competing for focus or a montage of heads tightly floating in rows across

the page, the draftsmanship is clear, his line is precise, and the clarity of the abstraction is visually striking. Meaning that this guy can draw interesting creatures and people and events that accentuate a missing narrative, which is more than many established artists can claim to achieve. The book is a bit pricey, but well worth it. Check out his website for prints, buttons and additional images of his work.



**9. *398 The Spider Issue* (contact [myspace.com/zine398](http://myspace.com/zine398))**

Elizabeth JMW's a zine-making machine cranking out superb issue after superb issue of 398 and editing *Perzines* (a collection of writing culled from other zines). This issue of 398 contains one of the best pieces of zine writing ever done about why one makes a zine in the first place. The piece is a short metaphorical story about a girl, Cornelia, who rescues a very wet spider, Timothy, from the rain. After that stormy night, Cornelia begins finding little treasures around her bedroom. Tiny booklets for her to look at and read. Some of these are delightful objects while others are sad confessions of loneliness. After amassing quite a collection, Thomas encourages Cornelia to make one of her own. When she does, that crafty little spider suggests she set it free find a new home where someone else might delight in it. The story is a well-written fable with an affable metaphorical conceit that pulls off the complicated task of working itself out on several levels of meaning. Until I read Elizabeth's story, I understood without comprehending the potential whimsical strangeness of zine making. I really admire this little

zine and everything Elizabeth has been able to set free into the cool night air.

**10. *TheTradingNetwork.Org* (<http://www.thetradingnetwork.org/>)**

The sole website on this list is a marvelous idea which I hope ratchets up its social networking potential. Basically, thetradingnetwork.org is a group of artists, crafty folks, and zine makers who are committed to trading their work with and for other people's work. In the halcyon days of old, pre-Internet, when Gunderloy still pecked out the tiny print of the encyclopedic *Factsheet Five*, there were invisible networks tying the bartering community together. Contacts that alerted contacts to other contacts and the whole mail art/zine scene escalated in kind. The example was established by *Factsheet Five*'s absurd generosity—its bulging 200+ pages were traded to all comers and was offered free to prisoners. Those of us struggling to fill twelve quarter-sized pages felt humbled by the sheer dedicated altruism of Gunderloy's massive project. Those days, though, have slowly faded into a more commercialized underground, a landscape where "free" is a suspect term and trades are more often turned down by an upturned nose. So one might imagine the excitement I felt when stumbling over this website dedicating itself to the old ways! I signed up immediately. Within a fortnight, I had bundles of zines ready to post to their new homes. Lately, this site has been slightly quiet, something I hope some of you can rectify. After all the best audience you can hope to find is one that wants to share with you, the author. This website is a great place to start.

*While there were many more moments where what I held in my hands inspired moments of joy, these 10 zines resonate, for from their presence in my life, better things now exist. I hope they bring you the same sort of pleasure.*



## TOP 10 PEOPLE WHO WOULD MAKE A BETTER PRESIDENT THAN MR. BUSH, BUT CAN'T (AND REASONS THEREFORE)

BY FRANK MAUCERI, SMOG VEIL RECORDS

1. Pat Paulsen (funnier, but dead)
2. Saul Alinsky (more proactive, but dead)
3. Rosa Parks (less fearful, but dead)
4. Rob Tyner (better singer, but dead)
5. Euell Gibbons (healthier, but dead)
6. Lenny Bruce (larger vocabulary, but dead)
7. Marla Ruzicka (more honest, but dead)
8. Rod Serling (tells a better story, but dead)
9. Abbie Hoffman (more creative, but dead)
10. Nardwuar (looks great in plaid, Canadian)

## 10 TOP HEADLINES OF 2006 PAIRED WITH QUOTES FROM SAWYER, OF THE HIT TV SHOW LOST, THAT SOUND AN AWFUL LOT LIKE THINGS GEORGE W BUSH WOULD SAY

BY LAURA PEARSON, PUNK PLANET ASSOCIATE EDITOR

1. House Ethics Committee Member Steps Down  
"So how does it feel? Taking my place at the top of everyone's most hated list. Sucks, don't it?"
2. Vice President Shoots Friend During Hunting Expedition  
"Don't look at me. I was just here pushing the button."
3. Bush Proposes Legislation to Authorize the Use of Military Tribunals  
"Sorry, I'm fresh out of sweet forgiveness."
4. Tom DeLay Leaves Congress  
"Why are you lookin' at me?"
5. Bin Laden Warns U.S. of al-Qaeda's Plans  
"If you'll excuse me, I've got some revenge to tend to."
6. Scientists Find Evidence of Water on a Saturn Moon  
"I take comfort knowin' some day, this is all gonna be a real nice shopping complex. Maybe even an auto mall."
7. Bush Tours New Orleans, Prom-

ises Change

"You got a Band-Aid?"

8. Sectarian Violence Continues in Iraq

"I'm guessing everybody's going to want to play cowboys and Indians. And once those guns are out and about, something tells me they ain't never going back in."

9. President Bush Turns 60

"Do I get a lollipop?"

10. North Korea Performs Nuclear Weapon Test

"Well, well. Look at who's got a secret stash . . . Seeing as I got all the guns, I do get to ask why."

## TOP 10 POLITICAL "MOVEMENTS/MOMENTS" THAT HAPPENED AND MADE ME THROW-UP IN 2006

BY HEATHER WHINNA, FILMMAKER, INDEPENDENT PROMOTER

1. Repeal of Marriage Licenses for Same-Sex Couples.
2. The continued existence of Estrojam & LadyFest (the ghettoization of woman musicians = dumb idea, duh).
3. The blind acceptance of the made-up term "partial-birth abortion" which is actually called a D&E.
4. States passing laws to make the murder of a pregnant woman considered a double homicide.
5. Jessica Hopper vs. "The Emo Scene" (the anti-feminist, victim mentality) & ummm although she resents being called a journalist (which she wrote in her *journal*) the paid journalist/"punk-rock publicist" calls Stephin Merritt a racist for publicly announcing he doesn't like hip-hop.
6. The upcoming ban on all abortions in the state of South Dakota, yet state Senator quipped . . .
7. "South Dakota Senator Bill Napoli, one of the leading backers of the ban, said on PBS that "brutalized and raped" religious virgins were the only ones deserving of legal abortions, and "there's no time like the present" for South Dakota to lead states in criminalizing abortion."
8. The large & growing International Christian "Missionary" movement disguised as feeding the poor.
9. Suicide Girls/Girls Gone Wild "Neo-Sexual Empowerment" movement (empowerment= showing off my tits & ass-tattoo).
10. The conviction of IL Republican Governor George Ryan for taking money in the the city of Chicago (seriously?) after he placed a moratorium on the death penalty.
- (11. Liberals abandoning the word Liberal.)

## TOP 10 THINGS I PREDICTED GEORGE W BUSH WOULD DO IN 2006 BUT THANKFULLY DIDN'T

BY JON RESH, DESIGNER/WRITER

1. Crown himself King of America.
2. Rename New York City to Snob-bypornocommietown.
3. Assassinate Stephen Colbert.
4. Allow standardized full cavity searches at airport check-ins. (Except for registered Republicans.)
5. Check every newborn in the United States, Afghanistan, and Iraq for 666 birthmark.
6. Declare war on Massachusetts.
7. Use executive privilege to force "stratergy" into the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*.
8. Designate all registered Democrats as enemy combatants.
9. Pass a law allowing the US to legally detain anyone without justifiable cause for an indefinite amount of time, torture them in detainment, give them little legal representation, and revoke their right to protest the treatment under the Geneva Convention. (Oh wait, silly me—he did that.)
10. Audit *Punk Planet*.

## TOP 10 REASONS WHY THE MILITARY COMMISSIONS ACT OF 2006 IS AMONG THE WORST LAWS PASSED IN AMERICAN HISTORY

BY JON RESH, DESIGNER/WRITER

1. It allows enemy combatants to be held indefinitely without trial or access to an attorney. A lawyer is assigned only once the detainee stands trial.
2. It allows wide leeway for coercive practices—i.e., "soft torture"—to be used for interrogation techniques. Specific limits are vague. Practices used in Soviet gulags and brutal dictatorships could be deemed acceptable.
3. It allows coerced and hearsay evidence if a judge determines it to be reliable. Coerced evidence is information obtained through force or extreme persuasion. Hearsay evidence is based on what someone has told a witness, not something the witnesses have seen or heard for themselves. Never in US history has such evidence been allowable.
4. It allows defendants to see only some—but not necessarily all—of the evidence against them. It also permits the exclusion of a defendant from a trial if classified evidence is being presented. A defendant can thus be prosecuted for evidence they never see or know. (This would never be admissible in an American court of law, nor would we allow it if an American soldier was on trial in a court elsewhere.)
5. It bans suspects from going to court to challenge the constitutionality of their confinement, and bans defendants from invoking the Geneva Conventions as a source of rights.
6. It removes a suspect's right to challenge his detention in court. It unjustly blocks courts from hearing petitions against capture and imprisonment of detainees, though they're held without charge.
7. It expands the definition of an "unlawful enemy combatant," including anyone who offers "material support" to someone engaged in hostilities against the US. Such an "accomplice" can be held indefinitely in military detention, regardless of whether he or she actually engaged in hostilities.
8. It suspends the writ of habeas corpus (i.e., the basic right of an individual to know why he or she is being apprehended and detained) for individuals designated enemy combatants against the US. (Habeas corpus was established in the 17th century and is a cornerstone of all democracies. It has arguably never been suspended to this degree in American history.)
9. Evidence obtained can be admitted in court even if it had been gathered without a search warrant.
10. No specifics of due process have been stated for this policy. As the law stands now, a person—American citizen or otherwise—labeled "enemy combatant" can, in theory, be whisked away without cause and never heard from again, legally.





BY DAN GRZECKA,  
POSTER ARTIST



# TOP 10 CHAIN FOOD ABOMINATIONS OF 2006 (THAT I SECRETLY WANT TO TRY)

BY ARI CHARNEY, PUNK PLANET REVIEWER

## 1. Taco Bell's Crunchwrap Supreme

It's too bad Taco Bell wasted a brilliant portmanteau like "Cruncheweesy" on the Cheesy Gordita Crunch, as the Crunchwrap Supreme is far more deserving of such a majestic designation.

## 2. Krispy Kreme's Key Lime Pie Donut

This donut atrocity is filled with key lime custard and topped with cream cheese frosting and graham cracker crunch. The last time I was this grossed out by a donut was during break in second grade when the teacher brought in a donut sampler and I mistakenly bit into a Boston Creme.

## 3. White Castle's Chicken Rings

While I may blanch at the thought of a burger with five holes, there's something about ring-shaped chicken pieces that just seems so right. Even the hapless ad agency tasked with writing the copy for White Castle's website threw in the marketing-speak towel when they got to this entry. In describing the chicken rings, they quip, "(They're) so perfect in fact, that you'll wonder how we make such precise circles. Very flexible chickens, people." These chicken rings are also a handy side order to have around in case you're thinking of proposing to your girl, or, even better, every girl in the White Castle parking lot.

## 4. Hardee's Philly Cheesesteak Thickburger

Ever since the introduction of their Monster Thickburger was rewarded with thousands of media impressions, Hardee's has been staking out its niche in the crowded fast food market as the fast food chain for unapologetic gluttons. Indeed,

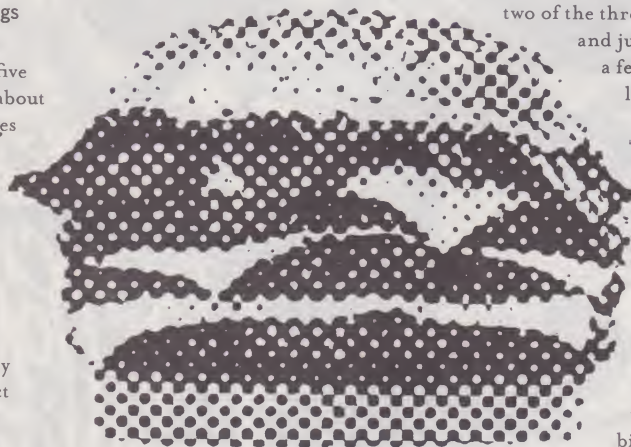
the press release that announced the Philly Cheesesteak Thickburger crowed, "Meat as a Condiment Goes to the Next Level . . ." And yes, it is, in fact, a hamburger topped with a cheesesteak.

## 5. IHOP's Cinnamon Swirl French Toast

Of all the items on this list, this one somehow seems the most Simpsons-esque. And since IHOP is already so comfortable offering fare such as cinnamon rolls dipped in French toast batter and fried, their test kitchen might as well start mining past Simpsons episodes for new ideas.

## 6. Starbucks' Blackberry Green Tea Frappuccino

Give Starbucks some credit. Most world-beating franchises grow more cautious as their brands mature. But Starbucks



is still not afraid to gross us all out. If you walked into a Starbucks last summer, you couldn't miss the promotional posters for this blended creme with an otherworldly hue. A blackberry flavored green tea frappe topped with whipped cream and blackberry syrup—in other words, fruity chalk paste.

## 7. Pizza Hut's Cheesy Bites Pizza

Pizza Hut truly is an innovator when it comes to tweaking the standard pizza format.

This monstrous blanket of cheese and pepperoni comes ringed with 28 "pullable, poppable" cheese bites because, you know, there's just never enough cheese on the pizza itself. My suggestion for a fun parlor game the next time you have company over is to try and brainstorm Pizza Hut's next corporate test kitchen folly. Here's my contribution to get things started: A pepperoni pizza topped with miniature pepperoni pizzas.

## 8. Ruby Tuesday's Triple Prime Burger

This burger is crying out for a co-promotion with AI Steak Sauce, as it's ground blend of prime tenderloin, prime rib-eye, and prime sirloin are the epitome of a steakburger. Still, I can imagine them getting lazy during a Saturday night rush, running out of one or two of the three primes

and just throwing a few breakfast

links into the

grinder

to get it done.

Actually, that might not be a bad idea for their next burger promotion: combine ground

beef and Italian sausage into a

single patty and call it the Due Amici Burger.

## 9. Burger King's BK Stackers Burger

Perhaps you've heard of those rare caffeine fiends who dare to order the quad cappuccino (a cappuccino with four shots of espresso). Well, Burger King is now seeking to offer the burger equivalent of the quad capp. BK Stackers encourages the Burger King patron to order a burger with up to four layers of beef and cheese topped with bacon and sauce. In other

words, according to their website, "no veggies allowed." This statement's overt scorn for necessary dietary fiber inspired my wife to dub this the "Colonoscopy Burger."

## 10. Arby's Loaded Potato Bites with Cool Ranch Sour Cream

Somehow driving around always gives me a powerful hankering for a fully loaded baked potato. But I know I'll somehow just end up with it in my lap. Thankfully, Arby's has transformed this unwieldy side dish with a creation allowing for maximum portability. These deep-fried wedge-shaped potato bites are studded with bacon bits and cheddar, and come with a little cup of Cool Ranch sour cream for dipping. Best of all, both items fit comfortably into the double cup holder in the middle console. Now if only they could add in bits of potato skin to the mix—that would be genius.

# TOP 10 RECIPES I LEARNED OR INVENTED IN 2006

BY NOMY LAMM, PUNK PLANET COLUMNIST

## 10. Vegetarian Chicken and Dumplings

I made my girlfriend's favorite childhood feast for her birthday, using gluten chicken ("quorn"), vegetarian chicken broth powder + water, bisquick dumplings all simmered together. Very realistic!

## 9. Kugel (Yiddish for "pudding")

OK, I learn how to make this at least once a year and then forget. It's my grandma's recipe: half a pound of egg noodles, four tablespoons of butter, a cup of cottage cheese, half a cup of sour cream, two eggs, a quarter-cup of sugar, and raisins. Mix it all together, dump it in a greased pan, and top it off with corn flakes crushed up with brown sugar and butter. (I don't know where they got corn flakes in the shtetl.) Bake one hour 325 degrees. Sooo not vegan, but soooo delicious.



## 8. Carrot Cake

Again, my girlfriend's favorite. Mix two cups flour, two teaspoons soda, two and a half teaspoons cinnamon, two cups brown sugar. Add one and a half cups vegetable oil, four eggs, a half-cup of raisins, three cups of grated carrots and one cup chopped walnuts. Bake in a greased, floured pan for about an hour at 325 degrees.

## 7. Nomy's Invention #1

Everything I invent is basically a bunch or random stuff thrown together to create a delicious mishmash. This one uses all raw, fresh ingredients, chopped up and mixed together. Brown rice topped with avocado, basil, spinach, apple (or mango!), and cashews, seasoned with flax oil, Bragg's liquid aminos, and nutritional yeast.

## 6. Massaged Chard Salad

That's right, massaged. I learned how to make this from a massage therapist. Thinly slice four or more large leaves of chard, including the stalks. Grate carrots and beets into the mix. Add chopped almonds and dried cranberries (ingredients can vary). Drizzle olive oil, sesame oil, brown rice vinegar and fresh lemon juice, then dig in and massage the fuck out of that salad with your bare hands, until the chard is limp and absorbent. Serve cold. This is my mom's new favorite food.

## 5. Nomy's Invention #2

This one should be cooked over time in a cast iron skillet. Onions, ginger, beets, and sweet potatoes sauteed in butter and curry powder. Add water, simmer covered for ten minutes or so. Add broccoli, kale, finely chopped garlic, cinnamon, apples, and coconut milk. Serve over rice.

## 4. Flourless Chocolate Cake

This one was seriously complicated, I won't be able to fully instruct you. It involves using a double boiler to make a custard out of egg yolks and sugar then melting in chocolate,

beating egg whites into "soft peaks," folding the melted chocolate and egg whites together, things I don't usually do. There's a recipe here: [www.cacaoweb.net/flourlesschocolatecake.html](http://www.cacaoweb.net/flourlesschocolatecake.html).

## 3. Paneer Korma

I actually have never made this; my girlfriend gave me this recipe. It's freakin' good. One package of paneer, cut into cubes, plus a quarter cup dry fruits and nuts (cashews and golden raisins, or get creative). Sauté in oil for two minutes, set aside. Heat oil in a large frying pan and sauté finely chopped fresh cilantro, garlic, ginger, and two onions. Add red chili powder, garam masala, turmeric powder to taste. Once the onions are translucent, put the mixture in a blender and liquify, then put it back in the pan. Reduce heat to simmer, add one cup cream, one can tomato sauce, half a package of frozen peas, and the paneer with the dried fruit and nuts. Simmer uncovered, stirring often, until peas are cooked. Serve over rice.

## 2. Nomy's Invention #3

I have been known to drink smoothies with all of these ingredients: avocado, banana, frozen mamey pulp (this is a Cuban fruit), berries, brown rice, flax meal, flax oil, juice (orange, strawberry, or cherry). I've even put kale in a smoothie. The first few ingredients make it thick and creamy, the brown rice makes it hearty, the flax oil makes it rich, the juice makes it drinkable. Yum.

## 1. Kombucha

This is a fungus/bacteria that digests caffeine and sugar and turns it into this healthy tonic that makes you live longer. You make tea and add sugar, then let it sit in a jar with the kombucha for ten days or so, then strain it, flavor it (if desired), and bottle it. The longer it sits, the stronger and more vinegary it gets. Once it's bottled if you leave it out

it will become more and more carbonated. Watch out, sometimes they pop their corks. My favorites have been made with Jasmine tea and cranberry juice, or Oolong and ginger. One time my mom did one with chai spice tea and it tasted like clove-flavored soda (but I don't think it was good for the kombucha, it got all brown and wilty). They produce "babies" which you have to peel off and either find new homes for, or throw away. They are fun and gross to handle, like a placenta.

## TOP 10 THINGS I ATE IN 2006

BY SARAH STONE WUNDER, PUNK PLANET REVIEWER

### 1. Refried beans, Las Mananitas, 3523 N. Halsted St., Chicago

Las Mananitas has the best refried beans I've ever had, and I'm a gal that eats a lot of Mexican food. I visit this his North Halsted establishment a couple times a month, and I'd recommend everything on the menu—just remember to order extra refrieds.

### 2. Fish tacos, Sidebar Grille, 221 N. La Salle St., Chicago

I'm 27, but I admit that I still giggle every time I order "fish tacos." However, these tacos at Sidebar featuring a delicious spicy sauce and crispy cabbage make the slightly embarrassing menu order worth it.

### 3. Pot stickers, The Chicago Diner, 3411 N. Halsted St., Chicago

Carnivore or not, the pot stickers at this all-vegetarian diner are some of the best you'll ever have.

### 4. Tapas, X/O, 3441 N. Halsted St., Chicago

I'm just going with "tapas" here because I can't remember everything I ate at X/O. But what I do remember is that everything was incredible.

### 5. Bavarian plate, Spatenhaus, Residenzstrasse 12, Munich, Germany

Speaking of not knowing what you're eating, I have no

idea what was on the Bavarian plate at this German eatery. I know there was some sausage on there. I think some pig knuckle. Some other stuff. All of it, though, was mighty tasty, especially when paired with spicy mustard.

### 6. Catfish burrito, Alto Cinco, 526 Westcott St., Syracuse, NY

I used to get this about once a week when I lived in Syracuse. The catfish is crunchy, spicy, and delicious. Visiting Alto, which we used to call hippie Mexican due to its dreadlocked, patchouli-drenched waitstaff and cooks, was a must when I visited Syracuse this year. Alto was a fabulous as ever, in all its hemp leaf glory.

### 7. Hot wings, Quaker Steak and Lube, 101 Chestnut St., Sharon, PA

No visit to the in-laws in Western Pennsylvania is complete without a trip to Quaker Steak for some hot wings. I've never met anyone who could eat the "atomic" wings, Quaker Steak's hottest level. However, with 18 types of sauces with varying levels of hotness, there are tasty wings to match every palate.

### 8. Salmon cakes, my kitchen, Chicago

My husband makes these for me when I've had a bad day, or when I'm celebrating something, or pretty much anytime he wants to make me happy. Crispy cakes, spicy mayo—I am one lucky wife.

### 9. Le Quack Japonais, Japonais, 600 W. Chicago Ave., Chicago

This Asian-French fusion duck dish at Japonais has so many different flavors going on—all of them delicious. However, that could be said for pretty much everything on the menu.

### 10. Cheeseburger, Boston Blackies, 164 E. Grand Ave., Chicago

Boston Blackies is known for its half-pound burgers, and for good reason. They're incredible. They're also surprisingly easy to polish off for their size—so good you won't notice how full you are.



## SUGAR FIX 2006: MY TOP 10 SUGAR-FILLED MOMENTS OF THE YEAR

BY SUE ANNE ZOLLINGER, PIE OF THE MONTH, INT'L.

### 1. Maple Butter.

If by some horrible misfortune you, like I, had no exposure to Maple Butter during your early life, go to your local shop or Internet or whatever RIGHT NOW and find some. It does not contain butter. It has a texture I cannot possibly describe with words but is both softly granular and stiffly creamy. The texture of maple butter (spread on a hot slice of baguette, for example) as it presses into the roof of your mouth and finds its way back onto your tongue is something you should not leave this world without experiencing. I have also found maple to be a potent aphrodisiac, but admit this may only be true if the consumer happens to be a hardcore sugar addict . . . ?



### 2. The Kit Kat Odyssey

Episode One: Damon Locks (of The Eternals), long-time lover of the Kit Kat, returns from tour of Japan bearing Green Tea flavored Kit Kats. Pale green exterior. Exotic. Smooth. Green Tea Kit Kat? What?

Episode Two: Damon returns from European tour with the even more amazing Blood Orange Kit Kat from Germany; dark chocolate with blood orange filling and a bat on the package design (so punk).

Episode Three: Start to find

proliferation of new, unusual Kit Kats stateside: milkshake, orange and cream, coffee, triple chocolate, extra crispy (didn't find it all that crispy). Mail some off to Damon (of course he's already seen them).

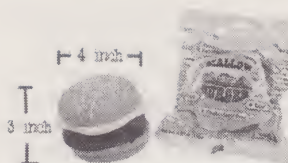
Episode Four: Read up on history of Kit Kat. Invented in Britain by Rowntree in 1935, named for some literary club that met in an 18th century pie-house (note to self: find out WHAT a pie-house is!). Kit Kat entry in *OED*: Kit-cat / kit-kat. (f. Kit (= Christopher) Cat or Catling, the keeper of the pie-house in Shire Lane, by Temple Bar, where the club originally met.). Apparently there are hundreds of different flavors. Hundreds? Really?

Episode Five: Spent \$60 buying crazy Kit Kats from Japan on eBay.

Episode Six: Ate \$60 of exotic Kit Kats "Seriously," I say to my friends, "look it up. These are just the tip of the iceberg! There are zillions more flavors." Then, just to blow their minds, I casually list all the flavors I had recently consumed: Cherry blossom (not cherry flavor, blossom flavor), Adzuki bean,

Chestnut, Wish Upon A Star flavor (I know, not a flavor, but yes a flavor), Mango, Apple, Fruit Parfait, Noir (extra dark chocolate dusted in black cocoa powder), I-stick Kit Kat (it's super long), An Nin Dofu Kit Kat, and some special gourmet blueberry cheese and passion fruit flavor developed by the Iron Chef Tagaki.

Episode Seven: Compulsively checking online sources for release of the much-awaited, and most certainly delicious, Pumpkin Kit Kat . . . details forthcoming . . .



### 3. Marshmallow Cheeseburger

A marshmallow of practically the size, shape, and color of a life-size cheeseburger. I say again . . . an actual life-size cheeseburger, but made entirely of marshmallow.

### 4. Danish Licorice

OK. If you don't like licorice skip to item #5. And by licorice I don't mean those plastic-like tubes of red stuff sometimes called "red licorice" here, but which has no actual relationship to real licorice, which is an extract from a plant. A plant that incidentally has no actual relationship to Anise . . . besides that they are both plants. But while Anise (in the mint family) and Licorice (in the legume family) are not the same plant, it is true that many "licorice" candies around the world use some blend of anise and licorice oils for flavor.

But I digress . . . The point is that the Danes know licorice. They really know licorice. For anyone who wants to experience licorice in a way that they thought was only possible in their blackish brown chewy salty sweet daydreams, go to Denmark. My recommendations:

— "Super Flyers"—1 cm diameter sweet chewy licorice tubes filled with loose rock crystals of Ammonium Chloride (like an edible pixie stick, only more . . . ammonia-y?)

— A candy bar (forgot the name) that while perhaps looking innocent, just like any old Mars bar on the outside, actually contains a thick, black, sticky, gooey, slightly salty, licorice flavored roofing tar that drips onto your chin and coats your teeth in black film.

— A creamy putty-colored giant scoop of licorice ice cream at the city zoo in Odense.

—Bagged mix of hard and chewy licorice in flavors ranging from sweet to salty to ammonium-y and even chili powder-y. You'll recognize it by the cartoon of a crazed warthog racecar driver on the front. It's called "Måtter Fågger" (unless your Danish is really good, I don't recommend trying to ask for this candy by name, and especially don't yell it at passers-by).



### 5. Eyeball-like Fruits that Taste Like Flowers

Walking through Chinatown in NYC one day, I found vendors selling all four of my most favorite fruits: rambutan, lychee, longan and mamoncillo. Some the most delicately flavored and sensual of fruits, they are all members of the same botanical family, the Sapindaceae, which, perhaps tellingly, is the same family as Maple (see item 1. Maple Butter). Similar in size to each other, and to an eyeball, they are small, juicy, sweet and pleasantly floral.

They are each consumed in the same way.

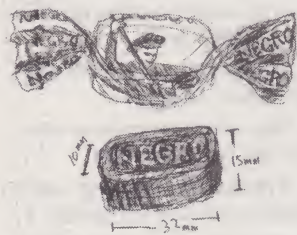
- Snap the skin in half with your teeth
- Carefully discard the top half of the skin
- Slurp the eyeball fruit into your mouth
- Suck the fruit off the single large stone.

In rambutan, lychee, and longan, this sucking is more like slurping and the fruit slips easily off the smooth stone. In mamoncillo, the pleasure is in the sucking process itself more than the fruit consumption (like chewing on licorice roots or



sugar cane), wherein the juice is extracted slowly and therapeutically from the stringy, slightly astringent stone.

Perhaps if you personally are not stuck living in southern Indiana, you will have a hard time imagining how this grand slam of eyeball-fruit sucking could have been such a hugely monumental event for me. I assure you, it was.



#### 6. Negro

I can say, without question, that this Serbian candy is the strangest sweet I have eaten in years. And, coming from me, this says a lot about its strangeness, to wit: I am currently sucking on a piece of pine sap candy from France, and please see item 4. Danish Licorice.

Not bad really, but not really good either.

Quick overview of its strangeness: Blue (not black). Hard candy shell tastes of licorice-camphor-eucalyptus-fruity-honey, contrasted with the soft filling of a distinct creamy toffee caramel that is slightly salty. Wrapper has large red letters reading "NEGRO" and a black line drawing of some kind of man I originally mistook for a bagpiper, then changed my mind to drum major, and now think more likely a chimney sweep in a floppy beret.

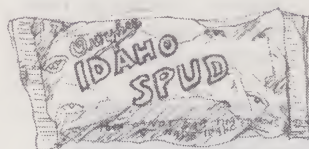
#### 7. Cotton Candy the Size of an Overweight Pug

Made by two boys at Oktoberfest much too young to be running a cotton candy machine. Completely lopsided, not entirely spun into floss, and eaten outside in a light drizzle, which caused the outer surfaces of the pink fluffy pug

cloud to bead up into droplets of chewy sticky crunchy hot-pink sugar goo.

#### 8. Idaho Spud Cream Pie

If you are familiar with this strange and possibly disgusting candy bar (depending on your feelings toward slug-shaped grey marshmallows covered in chocolate and coconut), you may find it difficult to imagine that a pie made from a pile of melted Spuds is actually, honestly, genuinely delicious. If you aren't familiar with the venerable Idaho Spud, consider this: The "big three" of American candy conglomerates (Mars, Hershey, and Nestlé), along with prohibitively high shelving fees charged by most/all corporate grocery stores, truck stops, and drug store chains have all but run every small independent candy bar manufacturer out of business in the last 30 years. So, if for no other reason than to support the "little guy" and keep these regional candy bars around for future generations, you should find yourself eight Idaho Spud Candy bars and make this pie ([www.idahospud.com](http://www.idahospud.com)).



**Idaho Spud Cream Pie Recipe:** In a small saucepan or microwave-safe bowl, melt eight Idaho Spuds and 1 1/2 C milk over medium heat or in microwave on high (stirring constantly, or at regular intervals, in micro). When mixture is smooth, set aside to cool. Whip 1/2 C. heavy cream until stiff. Fold whipped cream into slightly cooled mixture. Pour into pie shell and refrigerate until set. Top with whipped cream and either shaved chocolate or, if you can find them, those toasted coconut marshmallows cut in half (they look strangely potato-like).

#### 9. 15 Bags of Philippines Dried Mangoes.

At least 15. I'm probably being conservative so as not to appear gluttonous. Likely, actually.

#### 10. Kissing Boyfriend Immediately After He's Eaten Philippines Dried Mangoes.

I actually used to daydream about kissing the person I loved just after they ate Turkish delight. The kind covered in powdered sugar. But before you start picturing some slob who just ate a box of powdered donuts, I don't mean kissing someone with visible powder on their lips, but rather this unavoidable and unseen coating of very fine airborne sugar

that inevitably accompanies the consumption of dusted confections. I could so vividly imagine the surprise of the sugary lips combined with that heady rose perfume on their breath that I'd get a little bit dizzy feeling and stare off into space . . .

Anyway. No one I have loved has ever loved Turkish delight like I do. But, I recently discovered that dried mango has a similar aphrodisiac quality. Eaten as the boyfriend does, by slowly sucking off the sugary coating until it's this straight concentrated sliver of mango . . . and the fruity perfume of mango on his breath . . . yeah, it gets pretty close.

*What can I say? Sugar is my only vice.*

## PARENTING

### TOP 10 PUNKEST PARENTING MOMENTS OF 2006

BY MICHAEL CARRIERE, PUNK PLANET CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

10. Seeing the mischievous, excited look in my two year-old daughter's eye the first time she heard DC hardcore legends Void.

9. Observing my daughter leading a pack of older little boys through an obstacle-filled course around our local playground.

8. Listening to my daughter wail on her toy guitar like a mini Greg Ginn.

7. Finding out that there are a number of children's music CDs and DVDs that are not absolutely inane and mind-numbing (thank you, *Pancake Mountain* DVD series).

6. Watching my daughter put together outrageous outfits that would make even the most fashion-savvy punk do a double-take.

5. Dancing around the living room with my daughter to Bikini Kill's "Rebel Girl." Who says Riot Girl is dead?

4. Working on art projects with my daughter at home: my new definition of D.I.Y.

3. Raising someone that's already so smart and already so attuned to her feelings—and not afraid to

voice these thoughts and feelings.

2. Coming to the realization that a child is not an extension of you and your likes and dislikes. Expose them to everything, but don't feel bad when they don't want to follow your lead.

1. Hearing my daughter say "I love you" to me for the first time. It made my year, and probably even my life.

### TOP 10 WORDS MY 18-MONTH-OLD SON LEARNED IN 2006, SPELLED PHONETICALLY, WITH ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

BY DANIEL SINKER, PUNK PLANET FOUNDER AND PUBLISHER

1. Die!! (Music)
2. Ortz (Horse)
3. Bubble (Apple, Flower, and almost anything round)
4. Guck (Milk)
5. Asta (Pizza, derived from Pasta)
6. Ot Dot (Hot Dog)
7. Mao (Cat)
8. Oi Oi Oi (Pig)
9. Boooóoo!! (Cow)
10. FUCK!!! (Truck, said almost exclusively very loudly and in the presence of old women)



## TOP 10 THINGS ACTUALLY ON MY TO-DO LIST THAT I NEVER GOT AROUND TO IN 2006

BY ANNE ELIZABETH MOORE, *PUNK PLANET* CO-EDITOR

1. Look up actual annual sales of hotcakes on the Internet.

This I can't do, because no entrepreneur, if you can believe it, has bothered to track, online, the sales of hotcakes. This strikes me as a great flaw in our capitalist system, 'cause seriously, I would pay a dollar a month to have daily updates on the actual sales of hotcakes, probably two dollars if it were a searchable database, divisible by types of syrups and region and ingredients.

2. Ikea, Cambodia, India, New Orleans, Nicaragua.

I have quite a few places to get to these days but I never seem to be able to find the time, you know? They're all back on the '07 list, though, and I'm pretty sure I'll be able to get at least one of them taken care of within the year. Oh! What's weird is that the day after I wrote this list I totally went to Ikea, and it was staffed entirely by Indians. So I can knock both of those things off my list, maybe.

3. Health insurance.

As much as this is an extremely high priority for me—I have health issues, boy do I have health issues—and despite that technically I can probably start to think about being able to afford it now, finally, after some 12 years or so since I was last on a insurance plan—my parent's—I just really haven't had time since June to do the research required. Also, though, going from being the kind of girl who has health insurance from being the kind of girl who has no health insurance turns out to be sort of a big leap for me, and I haven't quite figured out how to deal with it, emotionally.

4. Frame all posters and artwork in

my apartment and office.

Very simply, I can't afford it. Damn you, talented artists and poster-people. Why do you beleaguer me with all your beautiful wares?

5. Do something about Juliette Lewis.

I think someone should, but I just can't figure out what, yet. Ideas?

6. Pay off student loans.

I mean: I started my master's program 11 years ago, and I'm not sure it can ever be said that I've actually used it. It's starting to seem like that library book that I haven't read, and won't ever, but that I can't return on principle anyway because I'm not done with it. Except like 10,000 times as expensive.

7. Wayne at California Psychics: 1-800-573-4830.

My best friend in the universe stopped advising me on my love life and started responding to all my dating questions by saying, "Have you called Wayne yet?" and even sent me a check to cover the cost of the call. But seriously, I'm supposed to take advice about my love life from someone in California named Wayne? I don't think so. Anyway, if it's so important I talk to them I would think they would call me. In fact, I suggested this sort of thing to my friend—that she call them about my love life if she was so damn interested in what Wayne had to say, and together they could just sorta feel it out from there, you know, psychically, but she said that wasn't funny and how was I ever going to find anything out if I didn't go to the experts?

8. Personal website.

I just don't think I can stand to be the person whose kitchen is in a fucking shambles but whose website looks great. Seriously, if you want my updated bio, maybe you can come over first and help me reorganize the spice rack.

9. Dentist.

Strangely, my reasons for not getting on this one are much closer to #7 (above) than anything else. If I really need a dentist that bad, I think, one will probably come to me.

10. Tattoo.

This has been on my to-do list since maybe 1991, but I just haven't found the right image yet. At first, it was, you know, gonna be some superhero thing. Supergirl, maybe. And then some underground comic-book thing, like the cigar-smoking writer girl in Dan Clowes's *Like a Velvet Glove Cast in Iron*. Then I was more excited about medical and biological imagery: a rendering of the exact bones and arteries in the exact location under the skin being tattooed, or some kind of winged bug, really really big. I also thought for a long time I would just pay a talented friend to draw something awesome and I would put it on my body somewhere appropriate, maybe some night after a lot of drinking. Most recently I wanted the Chicago flag on my arm, like Mike "The Intern" Barron has, or the Chicago Sky logo maybe, but not enough to actually go get it, apparently. Oddly enough, I don't think I'd regret having gotten any of these tattoos now.

## MY TOP 10 FAVORITE THINGS OF 2006 (IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER, EXCEPT FOR NUMBER ONE)

BY DAN DIDIER, DRUMMER (MARITIME) AND FATHER

1. Miette Rin Didier born May 1st
2. Hot Chip—*The Warning*
3. Wolfgang Tillmans retrospective exhibition at the MCA
4. The Streets—*The Hardest Way To Make An Easy Living*
5. Little Britain
6. Chuck Klosterman *IV*
7. Scoop
8. *Project Runway*
9. Band of Horses—*Band of Horses*
10. Little Miss Sunshine



## TEN PERSONAL "FIRSTS" FOR 2006

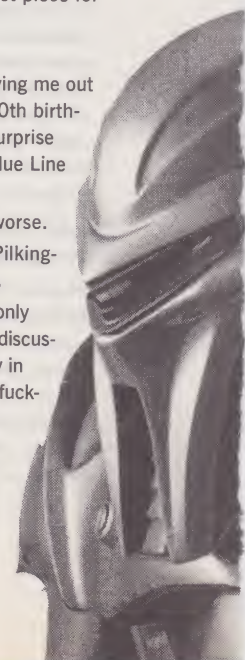
BY JAY RYAN, POSTER ARTIST

1. First broken wrist (skateboarding in Denton, Texas, March).
2. First solo painting show (August).
3. First time I missed a flight (to Germany, September).
4. First car accident with me as a driver (not my fault).
5. First real beard (Jan–May).
6. First time to see a couple of my favorite bands (including Big Black & the English Beat).
7. First solo drive from Bellingham, WA to San Diego, CA.
8. First time interviewed on television (for my poster book).
9. First ticket for a moving violation (rolled a stop sign in Evanston, IL).
10. First time I ever drove a friend with severe pain in his balls to the emergency room in NYC in the middle of the night.

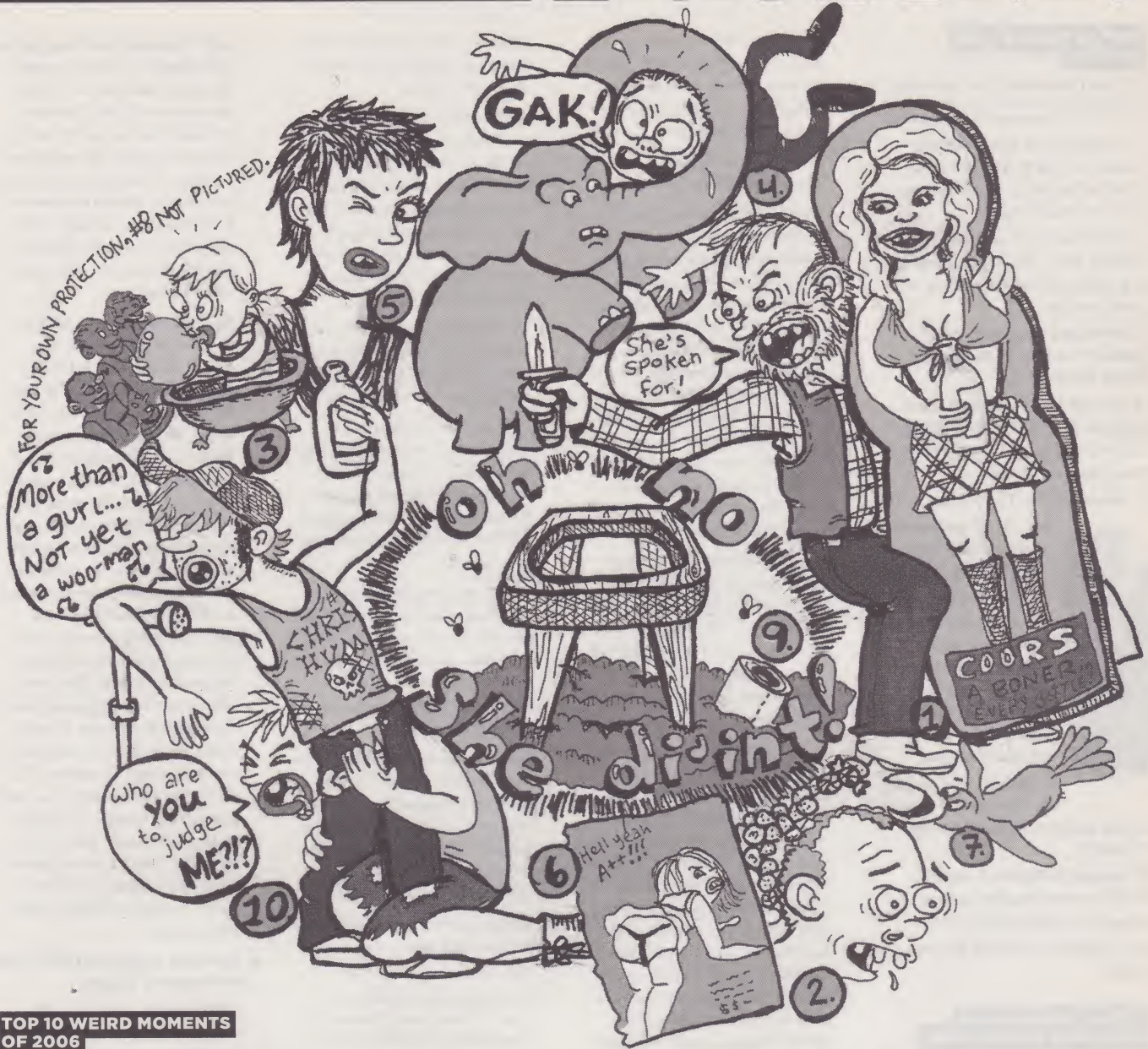
## TOP 10 INTERESTING DISCOVERIES, REVELATIONS, AND EXPERIENCES OF 2006

BY PAUL M DAVIS, *PUNK PLANET* CONTRIBUTOR AND VOLUNTEER

1. Moving to Chicago and discovering that people will actually pay you to write, promote music, and dick around in graphic design programs.
2. Promptly deciding to never work another food service job after realizing point #1.
3. The Famous Bowl.
4. Being added to the Department of Homeland Security's flight watch list a week after my first piece for *Punk Planet* ran.
5. Hot Doug's.
6. My lovely partner flying me out to Santa Cruz for my 30th birthday, and keeping it a surprise until we boarded the Blue Line to the airport.
7. The hangovers get worse.
8. The genius of Karl Pilkington and Monkey News.
9. Discovering that the only intelligent and complex discussion of US foreign policy in the mass media is on a fucking remake of *Battlestar Galactica*.
10. Killdozer Fridays.







## TOP 10 WEIRD MOMENTS OF 2006

BY JANELLE HESSIG, PUNK PLANET COLUMNIST

1. The midgetty cowboy in small town Nevada who danced (and savagely defended!) a busty Coors Lite lady made of cardboard
2. Paul Giamatti in *Lady In The Water*. All sensitive horror is lame. However, casting bug-eyed Paul Giamatti in a horror movie was a ridiculously awesome move. Like having Yosemite Sam star in a Broadway musical.
3. Whip-its in the bathtub on my birthday

### 4. Elephants Gone Wild!

After having their social structure fucked with for so many years, elephants have begun attacking humans and getting revenge!

### 5. Joan Jett at the carnival in San Rafael.

I thought she was flirting with me, but it turns out that Joan has a twitch. Who knew?

### 6. The dude in my animation class who makes elaborate drawings of his Playstation controller, sings to himself all day, and brings in maga-

zine clippings of ladies in naughty lingerie. He is going to win!

### 7. The "Failed Rides" section of the Disney exhibit at the Oakland Museum.

With some of the rides, I couldn't really understand why they didn't make the grade. Not so with Casey Jones' Railroad. Disney's "imagineers" decided to make the ride using REAL rock candy and it was soon overrun by birds.

### 8. The "muffbag" at the prisoners' inventions exhibit at the Yerba Buena museum in SF.

### 9. Pooping outside of a ghost town on a stool with a hole cut out of it.

It was surreal and quiet, like pooping on the moon.

### 10. A crusty giving a handjob to another crusty while singing Britney Spears at karaoke (witnessed by Sarah Bailey).

They cited "crusty persecution" as the reason they were kicked out.



# PERSONAL

## TOP 10 THINGS I DID IN 2006

BY **JON LANGFORD**, THE MEKONS, WACO BROTHERS, HOST OF "THE ECLECTIC COMPANY" ON WXRT FM.

1. Looked inside Hank Williams trousers at Marty Stuart's honky-tonk archive while on exciting family trip to Nash Vegas.
2. Performed at The Touch & Go/Hideout fest—the clouds hanging low overhead and not a blade of grass in sight.
3. Went backstage with Peter Doyle at the Sydney Justice and Police Museum.
4. Opened for The Goldie Lookin' Chain at the Transporter Bridge's 100th birthday party in my hometown Newport, Gwent.
5. Reformed The Three Johns.
6. Didn't get arrested with the Waco Brothers at Octoberfest in Menasha, WI.
7. Swam up and down in the salt water concrete pool at Bronte Bay in Sydney with the waves crashing over the sides.
8. Had Ian MacLagan of the Faces as my guest on the Eclectic Company (on my birthday!)
9. Tatooed ARROGANT and STUPIDITY on my forearms and renewed my resident alien card.
10. Finished the fuckin' Mekons album.

## TOP 10 MEMORABLE READINGS I DID IN 2006

BY **T COOPER**, NOVELIST

1. Corte Madera, CA: Book Passage

I was doing a reading for *A Fictional History of the United States with Huge Chunks Missing*, with my co-editor Adam Mansbach and contributor Daniel Alarcón. We were talking about the ways in which history is being hijacked these days, how facts are being spun-controlled by the current administration, and before we know it, this bullshit will slip between the covers of our history books, blah blah blah. When we opened it up to

questions, this older guy in the back—if I had to guess I'd say he was a Korean War-era vet or something—raised his hand, and I called on him.

"You know about the Native American and the settler?"

We're thinking we're getting a joke, and so we sort of uncomfortably gestured for him to continue: "Well, one day a white man on a horse rides up to an Indian in the middle of the West, gets off his horse and says, 'How much of this land is yours?' and the Indian points in all four directions and says, 'All of this.' But really, who's to say who owned what? What does this mean, pointing in every direction? I mean, who's to say who owns the air?"

Adam and I sort of waited to see which direction this was going as he trailed off, but then Daniel, who had been silent the entire time (outside of his reading), leaned over into the mic and said, "I'm going to go on record and say it was the Indian's land."

The guy looked at him and paused for a second, but then completely ignored Daniel and said, "Well, let me just tell you what happened next. The Indians invited all the white men to dinner, and they share corn and turkeys and break bread, and they're all sitting there, and what, so we're supposed to believe that the white man just took out his musket and shot all the Indians dead? Now tell me, is that good business? I don't think so."

2. Oakland, CA: Oakland Public Library

This is another reading with the same line-up as above, and similarly during the Q&A, the first hand shot up and asked Adam a question about his story, which is about Ota Benga, the African pygmy who was taken from his home and displayed at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904, and then displayed in the Bronx Zoo in the monkey house. This wom-

an said, "You know that wasn't true, anything in your story about the pygmy."

Adam said, "Well actually, that's what's so amazing about it, the truth being stranger than fiction, that all of the facts of Benga's life are in my story, and the only thing I made up was the perspective from which the story was told, that of the zoo-keeper."

The lady was like, "Well, no, it's not true, and even if it was, then you'd be plagiarizing for the purposes of your story."

"Thank you for your thoughts," Adam said politely, "but really, it's true that Mr. Benga was displayed in the Bronx Zoo, and I am a teacher and writer and know well what plagiarism is."

"Well, you did plagiarize if what you're saying is true. Let me introduce myself. [Standing] My name is Dr. Betty [undecipherable], and I'm a Federal Drug Administration investigator, and I . . ."

Adam interrupted her to defuse the situation: "Well, I've never been interrogated by an FDA official . . ." The lady then cut him off: "Honey, I'm not interrogating you. If I was interrogating you, you'd know it."

3. Munich, Germany: Hubert Burda Media headquarters

This company is the German equivalent of Hearst, Time Warner, and Newscorp combined, and I did a press reading/Q&A/luncheon on a balcony on a warm and sunny Munich day, hours before the Pope was to show up in town. (Yes, I did purchase an official souvenir Pope Benedikt XVI mug and mouse-pad). When I arrived, my photo was projected all over the walls and on screens in the lobby, there were posters about me and my event on all the walls, and when I walked around the building, people were staring at and whispering about me as I passed. John Grisham was the only author that my pub-

lisher had an event like this for previously, so all the people thought I was like, well, the equivalent of John Grisham in America. I'm pretty sure it was pretty much the only time I will get to feel like a rock-star as a writer. Germans seem to know how to treat their writers—that is, as contributors to the culture on par with musicians and actors.

So, as if that wasn't enough to make this one of my top events of the year, I think I got the best question I've ever been asked at a reading. This youngish guy was gripping my book and raised his hand from the back. First he asked whether I knew Eminem (who, along with Charles Lindbergh, plays a large role in my novel). Then he asked if we could rap a little together. I sort of joked it off with something about the book being fiction, and he trailed off as the audience laughed nervously. But then when I was signing books after the reading, he came up and asked me to sign his copy with the following inscription: "I tie a rope around my penis and jump from a tree." (I'm sorry to say, I declined. But I did inscribe it with a less offensive lyric—part mine, part Eminem's—which seemed to make him happy.)

4. Baltimore: Charm City Kitty Club at the Patterson Theatre

This woman came up to me when I was signing books after the show, and asked what my novel was about. I directed her to the flap, because sometimes you just can't answer that question yet another time when they've got the book in their hand. When she saw that Charles Lindbergh was a part of the book, and that it was about immigrant Jews too, she said, all schooling me like: "You know, Charles Lindbergh was a rabid anti-Semite," and I was like, "REALLY? NO, I didn't know that, but thanks for telling me, because now when I write the sequel, I can





add that in." (This was about the tenth time I've been told by an older, clearly more intelligent person than myself that Lindbergh was anti-Semitic.) She sort of looked at me to figure out what my angle was, and so I immediately felt bad and played it up, acknowledging that I was joking, and that of course I knew about Lindbergh and that the detail she shared is in fact very much a complicated part of the novel. I know it sounds like I'm the biggest bastard in the world right now, but I'm telling you, this is when I realized I'd hit my touring limit and that I needed to take a mental break before heading out on the road again.

#### 5. Bellingham, WA: Village Bookstore

Now this was just one of those nights where you pull into a small town, and you're like, there are cows less than five minutes from here; who the hell is gonna be showing up at this reading? And then you walk into the bookstore, and there are like fifty smiling people sitting there and waiting to hear what you and your co-editor have to say. Then throughout the reading people are nodding their heads and laughing at all the right places and oohing and aahing, and then after the reading portion is done, stimulating discussion ensues, and as you're rushing out of there to get to the only restaurant that stays open past 9:00, you're thinking, "Wow, I'm never reading in big towns again. From here on out, it's small towns with captive audiences with nothing else to do on a Saturday night but check me out."

#### 6. Torrance, CA: Borders

One person showed up to this reading, and she was a Borders employee from another division of the store. Well, one other person was there, but it was my friend Diane who accompanied me, so I don't think she really counts. But I was particularly thankful to Diane that night: one, because she

took pity and bought a copy of my novel, but second—and mostly—because her coming with me allowed us to drive in the carpool lane on the 405 freeway down from Los Angeles, and this saved upwards of an hour of driving time. I never regret yet another opportunity to re-confirm what a pal Diane is.

#### 7. Los Angeles: Dutton's Bookstore

As a *Libra*, I've found that pretty much nothing is all good nor all bad in my life, that intense highs are soon followed by intense lows, and vice versa. So on the evening after the empty Torrance reading, I had another in Los Angeles proper, where my hometown crowd came out and showed some love. I think this reading was the spark that ultimately got my novel onto the *LA Times* Bestseller list a week later—a first for me—so this was, for very obvious reasons, a very special reading for me.

#### 8. Frankfurt, Germany: RomanFabrik ("novel factory")

Not all of my German readings went as well as number 3, where I glimpsed for one moment a fraction of what it might be like to be P. Diddy. About two members of the press attended this reading/press luncheon I did in Frankfurt, and then the two people who ran the venue were guilted into attending as well—I think this was partly because they felt bad for me that nobody else showed up, but mostly I think it was because they were hungry, and there was a nice spread up there, plus an open bar.

We sat outside at a table on the deck above the venue, and basically my editor asked what the two press members wanted, sort of implying that it didn't make sense for me to give a full reading, but alas, one of them said she hadn't yet read the book and would love to hear me read from it. So, I basically had to sit there and give a private, face-to-face reading for one person, and

then sit around and entertain everybody with answers to their questions while they ate a lunch which I could not personally enjoy because of the meat and dairy involved. There were some shish-kebobs of fruit, but I couldn't figure out a way to eat them politely off the stick while answering the requisite questions about how I became a writer, why I wrote the book I did, is it autobiographical, etc.

My only consolation was the wooden sculpture of a naked man with a deflated penis and testicles which stood directly behind me the whole time—a little personal devil—keeping



me steady throughout the ordeal [see photo].

#### 9. Santa Monica, CA: Barnes & Noble (Third Street)

This was a transcendent night, one I wished could've been recorded (well, it was recorded, as a podcast for Truthdig.com, but the sound didn't end up coming out), for others who weren't in attendance to hear. I was joined by amazing writers on this night: Ron Kovic ("Born on the Fourth of July"), Felicia Luna Lemus ("Trace Elements of Random Tea Parties"), and the fiercely progressive veteran journalist Robert Scheer hosted the evenings reading and discussion. It was just such a flat-out honor not only to publish Ron's work in my anthology, but also to meet him and get a chance to do a reading with and hear him read from and speak about his work. His thoughts about

the current war with respect to past wars was thoroughly touching and illuminating, but most poignant was his answer to a question from a woman in the audience who sounded hopeless about the current state of affairs in our country. He acknowledged how important it is to be angry, and we were all tripping on this for a bit, but it was Ron who ended on a truly inspiring note, stressing that without hope, our hard work and activism are pointless. It might sound cheesy, but collaborating with Ron and Bob reminded me of how important it is to pay homage to those who essen-

tially invented the wheel before us, literally in the trenches during a time that was perhaps even more perplexing and impossible than now.

#### 10. Three-way thematic tie: New York/San Francisco/Portland

This is a tie among three different readings I did in 2006 (at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, Cody's, and Powell's, respectively), where one person fell asleep in the audience each time. (Yo, I did over 50 events this year in two different countries for three different books, so 3 out of 50 isn't the worst ratio.)

I like when people fall asleep at my readings because it's comforting to be reminded of how comforting it is for people of all ages to have somebody read to them in a safe, quiet place where nobody asks you to do anything but sit still and be quiet for a spell.



## MY TOP 10 EVENTS, PEOPLE, PLACES, RECORDS, BOOKS, AND CULTURAL LANDMARKS AND TOUCHSTONES OF 2006

BY LARRY LIVERMORE, PUNK PLANET COLUMNIST

1. The Steinways—*Missed The Boat* LP
2. The Leftovers—live, plus all their records
3. The Insubordination Records Fest—Baltimore, June 2006
4. The Pop Punk Message Bored
5. New York City
6. Gilman Street's 20th anniversary—December 31, 1986-2006
7. Santiago—*Rosenberg's After Dark* LP
8. My new big toe—surgical implant
9. *King Dork*—novel by Frank Portman
10. The Zatopeks—live, recorded, everything

## TOP 10 THINGS PEOPLE SAID TO ME THAT WERE LAME AND THEY DIDN'T REALIZE IT

BY PAT CASTALDO, BUYOLYMPIA.COM

1. That's *actually* a good idea.
2. We only have refried beans.
3. Now you're thinking.
4. We're going to have an awesome live Jazz band at the party.
5. Thanks for the add.
6. See ya later.
7. If you don't mind, you can do it.
8. We have *pink* lemonade.
9. *Knock, Knock*.
10. We don't have drip coffee, but I can make you an Americano.

## TOP 10 STATEMENTS OF 2006

BY SEONAIKH ADAMS, FREELANCE WRITER AND GAELIC-MEDIUM TEACHER, SCOTLAND

1. *Ar Cànan, Ar Ceòl, Ar-a-Mach* CD by Oi Polloi.

May. Contemporary, original and varied new punk rock written and sung in the ancient indigenous language of Scotland. Despite being a

minority tongue in its own land, Scottish Gaelic is very much alive. However, much of native Gaelic culture in inward looking and conservative. There is very little new material written in the language, with new bands recycling old songs again and again. Being punk in Gaelic is a statement and in the wider context, using a minority language is a statement. Even, in the punk world there is very little linguistic diversity. Politics aside, this is probably the most complete and musically accomplished of all Oi Polloi's releases. In a similar vein, we've had the release of the *Gàidhlig Na Lasair* CD featuring 5, mostly punk bands, singing in Gaelic. And finally the ancient Gaelic/Pictish name for Scotland, 'Alba', was printed on our national football strip for the first time.

2. World Cup 2006

June/July, Germany. A festival of crass consumerism with companies falling over themselves to be the 'official'

sponsor of everything from the football studs to the toilet paper. On the other hand, hundreds of thousands of fans from all over the world celebrating together in a country that's dealing successfully with a heavy historical burden.

3. 'Bonfire of the Brands'

September, London. The name says it all really. Brands built on third world sweatshop labour that fuel our desires for an identity. Ironically, the UK's consumers are collectively £200m in debt but still lag behind El Salvador in the world "happiness" league table.

4. Banksy's Paris Hilton stunt.

Crass-inspired guerrilla artist takes a break from stenciling on walls and subverting

oil paintings to flood record stores with fake Paris Hilton CDs. CD is bought, remixed by DJ, cover is copied and doctored with slogans and hundreds of copies redistributed nationally. Genius.

5. Hugo Chavez's speech to the UN.

One of Latin America's thorns in Bush's side claimed that Bush wished to "preserve the current pattern of domination, exploitation, and pillage of the peoples of the world." He also referred to Bush as "Satan."

6. Island of Punk festival, August, Scotland.

A D.I.Y. success story on Crumond Island, on the outskirts of Edinburgh. 300 punks, donations only, one generator, home-made stage, Taiwanese television crew and bands such as Oi Polloi, Jockney Rejects and In Decades Decline. D.I.Y. not Rupert Murdoch's MySpace!

7. *The Day the Country Died—A History of Anarcho-Punk 1980-1984* book by Ian Glasper.

October. Following the *Burning Britain* book on '80s punk in the UK, we have a documentary of the same period's anarcho scene. It may not have changed the world but it did inspire many individuals to positive action for peace, for animal rights and against fascism. A fascinating look at the idealism and philosophy of 'anarcho-punk' including AOA, Alternative and Oi Polloi from Scotland and such household names as Crass, the Subhumans, The Mob, Rudimentary Peni, Icons of Filth, Zounds and the Apostles.

8. *The Wind That Shook The Barley* film by Ken Loach,

July. Honest account of English imperialism in 1920s Ireland and the formation of the Irish Republican Army as a response to it. Black and Tan thugs terrorise a largely rural population and Irish peasants take up arms against an empire. Gritty and non-roman-

tic, the film studies the contradictions on both sides and the sadness of the civil war that followed Ireland's partial freedom from English rule.

9. *Execution of a Teenage Girl* Television documentary by BBC TV,

August. A brave and stomach-churning account of Iran's Islamic system of Sharia Law. A 16-year-old girl is raped then is charged with "crimes against chastity." She is then publicly hung from a crane. A warning that whatever Israel's war crimes in the region, simply supporting 'the enemy of my enemy' is not always a morally sound option. Religious fascism is not an answer.

10. *Documentaries that Changed the World—The John Pilger Collection* DVD.

October. Collection of four of John Pilger's award-winning and groundbreaking documentaries going back to his observations of mutinying US conscripts in Vietnam. Challenging and honest accounts from a man who's contributions to journalism are as important as those of Chomsky's to political philosophy.

## TOP 10 CUSS WORDS

BY NADINE NAKANISHI, PUNK PLANET DESIGNER AND ILLUSTRATOR

1. fuckstick
2. shitwig
3. ratprick
4. dumpsters
5. that's bushshit
6. flappdooop
7. hangmuffler
8. snagrag
9. shitface
10. artifuck

## IN 2006...

BY ERIC NAKAMURA, GIANT ROBOT

1. Everyone who was part of the "everyone can be a DJ" movement sold their gear off.
2. Some of those people quickly became fine artists this year. I hope they stick with it.





My technique and I  
are not working well together.  
I am thinking about a divorce.  
or at least a separation.

10-19-2006

# I THINK YOU'RE MISSING THE POINT

TOP TEN SEMI-  
INSIGHTFUL  
AND/OR  
PERSONALLY  
CONSTRUCTIVE/  
DEPRECATING  
ITEMS  
SCRAWLED  
IN/ON  
SKETCHBOOKS,  
RECEIPTS,  
NAPKINS, OR  
SCRAPS OF  
PAPER IN/  
AROUND 2006

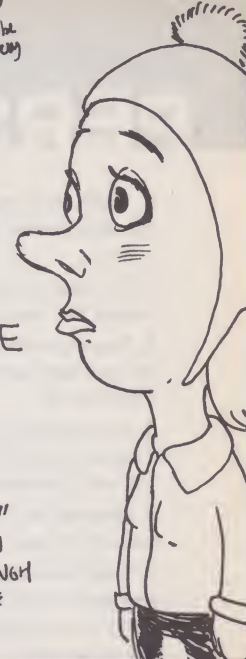
BY PAUL HORNSCHEMIER, COMICS ARTIST

IN THINKING THAT YOU NEED TO ACCEPT "LIFE'S IMPERFECTIONS,"  
BECAUSE THIS HOLDS SOME STANDARDS BEYOND LIFE. SOMETHING  
PERFECT. RATHER, THE ACCEPTING SHOULD BE OF WHAT IS, AND  
THAT THIS IS PERFECTION. ACCEPTING LIFE IN ITS BEING, WITH  
NOTHING ABOVE IT TO JUDGE OTHERWISE.

OH  
SAD-EYED  
WINTERY  
GIRLS,  
HOW  
YOU  
LOBOTOMIZE  
ME.

AD HOC NOTE:  
(I THINK "WINTERY"  
WOULD HAVE BEEN  
BETTER THERE, THOUGH  
BOTH ARE IN THE  
DICTIONARY.)

believe  
that  
could be  
wrong



## HOPE

IS A HEAVY  
DRINK:  
IT DULLS  
THE REASON  
AND CONFUSES  
THE SENSES



## BUT

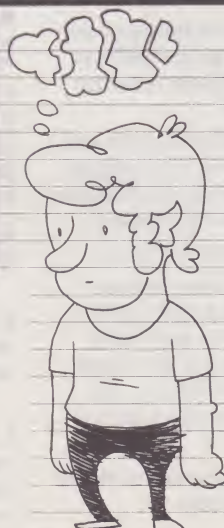
IT'S NICE  
TO HAVE  
AROUND.

1-23-2006

STILL ON THE PLANE

If God intervenes,  
why does it do so?  
Did God make a mistake?  
God creates all and knows  
all, but steps in to live  
things up? Something is  
either wrong with our  
description of God or with  
this God person.

But perhaps I shouldn't  
write such things on a plane.



WHILE YOU'RE  
SITTING HERE,  
DEPRESSED,  
THINK:

## WHAT WOULD MAKE YOU HAPPY?

YOUR FIRST RESPONSE,  
PROBABLY IN ERROR,  
IS THE RIGHT WOMAN  
WOULD PROVE THE

## SOLUTION,

BUT, AGAIN,  
THIS IS WRONG: YOU  
CAN FEEL THIS

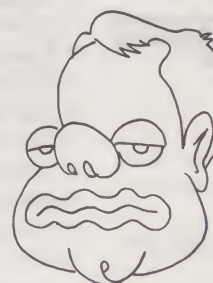
## INSTANTLY.

WHAT THEN?  
IS IT COMPLETELY

## WITHIN

YOURSELF.  
THIS NEEDED CHANGE  
OF STATE?  
ARE YOU EVEN CORRECT  
IN YOUR SUPPOSED  
AWARENESS OF YOUR  
EMOTIONS?  
ARE YOU EVEN  
DEPRESSED?  
OR DO YOU  
SIMPLY NEED TO

## EAT?



2-1-2006

TODAY I TRIED  
ME WORD "WRONG"  
COMPLETELY BACKWARDS.

I THINK I MIGHT  
ACTUALLY BE DYSLEXIC.

I MEAN, LANGUAGE  
ACQUISITION, PRONUNCIATION,  
SPELLING... I'VE ALWAYS  
BEEN HORRIBLE AT THESE.

MY JOB IS  
TO TAKE NOTHING  
AND PUT IT BACK  
TOGETHER AGAIN

10-1-2006

## The New Idea

IS A CONSTANTLY RENEWING TOY.  
THE REALIZATION, THE COMPLETION,  
THESE ARE CHIPPED, GAMES PLAYED,  
PIECES BROKEN AT WORST, AT BEST  
BOREDOM. THE ADVERTISED LESS  
GLOWING THAN THE ADVERTISEMENT.

IN THE PARK 9-25-2006



# PERSONAL

3. Those same people knew someone who opened a store or gallery or both.

4. Everyone who made a vinyl toy wanted their products sold there.

5. Everyone who started a "clothing" company wanted their T-shirts sold there too.

6. All the hype was developed through a blog that tried to show how cool they are or aren't.

7. Everyone became a hipster by donning the gear.

8. They also bought designer sneakers (usually Nike Dunks) but didn't do any sports.

9. Limited edition got tired, but kept some on a "higher" level than others.

10. The means of production leveled the playing field for everyone to do almost anything. It was used for both good and bad. We'll see what happens in 2007.

## TOP 10 OF RANDOM THINGS AND EVENTS, 2006 (NO ORDER)

BY ALEC BOURGEOIS, DISCHORD RECORDS

1. *The Punishment of Virtue: Inside Afghanistan After the Taliban* by Sarah Chayes

2. "Lidia's Song" by Joe Lally from the CD *There to Here*

3. Creation Stewardship

Evangelical environmentalists—no kidding!

4. The Dead Chef ([www.thedeadchef.blogspot.com/](http://www.thedeadchef.blogspot.com/))

If you speak Italian, you'll be rewarded.

5. Duos—cut the fat!

6. All the President's lies

They're all priceless.

7. The Dada show

The *New Yorker* calls it "juvenile"—that's endorsement enough!

8. Connie Rice—Condoleezza's cousin

9. Azzurri! (World Cup)

10. Tony Blair

2 PMs down (Spain, Italy) one to go!

## TOP 10 PHOTOS OF 2006 I WISH I COULD HAVE MADE

BY CHRISSEY PIPER, PHOTOGRAPHER

1. A portrait of Bush dressed as Osama Bin Laden.



2. A portrait of Bush and Hussein sitting next to one another.

3. A portrait of Bush dressed as a clown with a big plastic ass.

4. Bush and Blair's engagement photo (not sure who would wear the dress in that one).

5. Bush looking at himself in the mirror when he wakes up in the morning.

6. Schwarzenegger being bit in the ass by a border patrol dog.

7. Brooke Shields beating the shit out of Tom Cruise.

8. The Zapatistas marching into Mexico City.

9. Billy Bragg because I've always wanted to photograph him.

10. Terry Gross because I think she is cool.

## TOP 10 JOKES ABOUT FASHION AND MONSTERS

BY DEREK MCCORMACK, NOVELIST

1. What size dress did the spiritualist wear?

Medium

2. What make-up do vampires love?

Mascary

3. What kind of shoes do vampires wear?

Bat-ent leather.

4. What kind of feathers does a vampire wear?

Macaw-bre.

5. Which designer does Dracula hate?

Christian Lacroix.

6. Who sewed the witch's dress?

A screamstress.

7. Who sewed the vampire's cape?

Tailor from the Crypt.

8. Who sewed the monster's gown?

Couturier from the Black Lagoon.

9. Who was the ghosts's favourite couturier?

Boo-lenciaga.

10. Where can you see a horrible monster?

In the mirror.

## TOP 10 THINGS THAT MADE 2006 WAY BETTER THAN 2005

BY CARRIE WESTON, DJ WLUW FM CHICAGO

1. None of my friends or family died. Unlike 2005, which was a wholesale slaughter.

2. We are one year closer to not having Bush in office.

2a. The Republican scandals are really fun to watch.

3. Da Bears.

4. All the mind-blowing music festivals. All Tomorrow's Parties, Pitchfork, Touch and Go/Hideout Fest. So much good music, so many tears of joy.

5. Doubling our household cat population. The joy of Speedball and Spider joining the clan outweighs the litter issues.

6. WLUW, a non-profit community radio station I work for in Chicago, finally (barely) became self-sufficient thanks to our awesome listeners.

7. My mom moved to Chicago.

8. Discovering *Project Runway*. I know, I know. But there's something great about a reality show where people have to be creative and skilled under deadline, and don't just have to eat a bucket of worms.

9. I finally got comfortable with my body and all its flaws.

10. Falling into the vortex of YouTube. All the Fall videos I can handle, weird Japanese game shows, and the *Daily Show* posted for free. I don't have cable. This is my cable.

## TOP 10 WORST THINGS ABOUT 2006 (NO ORDER)

BY DAVE HOFER, PUNK PLANET REVIEWS EDITOR

1. Still no new clipse album

(as of this writing, it's release date is December 12th, 2006).

2. Not grilling as much as last year.

3. *Love Monkey* cancelled . . . twice.

4. *Monday Night Raw* kind of sucking live.

5. Not being able to afford all of the records I want.

6. New condos in my neighborhood.

7. Not having the time or chops to join Lair of the Minotaur.

8. That big, fat, white power guy at all of the metal shows.

9. Missing Cliche live.

10. The stupid fucking House of Blues telling me that I couldn't bring my Male Urban Warrior Bag with all of my shit in it into the Lawrence Arms show, but that they were allowing women with purses in without question, and then having to ask the guitar player of the Lawrence Arms (who I barely know), if I could stash my bag in their van during said show. Talk about uncomfortable.

## TOP 10 REASONS THE ART DUMP CAN'T AGREE ON A TOP 10 LIST

BY THE GIRL SKATEBOARDS ART DUMP

1. "It's impossible to narrow such a huge array of possibilities to just 10. Plus, I vacillate so much from day to day that I can't commit to a list."—Andy Jenkins

2. "Because I'm busy iChatting with Kelly Bird all day long."

—Andy Mueller

3. "We're not all on the same page about goats and their mandatory inclusion on any list, ever."

—Tony Larson

3.5. "We're not all on the same page about strippers and their mandatory inclusion on all Top 10 lists, ever." —Lardog



4. "Because I don't give a shit."

—Jeremy Carnahan

5. "I don't feel comfortable making a decision about anything unless I'm within five miles of a meth lab, no closer than two miles to my nearest neighbor, and holding a can of Natural Light."—Eric Anthony

6. "Still do not comprehend the use of 'brody; as a grammatically correct expression in Southern California . . . and doubt I ever will."

—Michael Coleman

7. "Because I am Japanese and everyone else is American." [default answer to all Art Dump issues]

—Misato Suzuki

8. "Contact with anyone besides Kelly Bird is prohibited." [via email bounce-back notice]—Chris Waycott

9. "Because illegal immigrants are not allowed to vote."

—Christian Morin

10. "Because 9.5 entries is far more punk than 10"

—The Art Dump

#### TOP 10 FOR 2006, IN SEVERAL WAYS & NO PARTICULAR ORDER

BY MAIREAD CASE, PUNK PLANET REVIEWER

10. Sleater-Kinney, doing their own soundcheck even though it's their next-to-next-to-last show at Lollapalooza. Honorable mention to überdude in hemp choker and muscle shirt, screaming, without irony, for "Little Babies! Little Baaaaa-aabies!"

9. South Bend, Indiana, seven degrees and cold wind. I have purple hair and am staring at my neighbor's newest lawn display, which features a bigger-than-life Jesus, crucified, only he's flanked by American flags instead of robbers. I do not know if Jesus is talking to me or not, but I'm getting hungry.

8. Blueberry Muffin #85: The man at Kim's Kitchen in Evanston, Illinois, who said that he and his boyfriend bought an aquarium for the bedroom, because when it gets cold there is nothing like glass and light and fish.

7. The time to stop Paxil. For a while, it wasn't time, and it is important to know the difference. I

dreamed about cats igniting and disjointed rabbits, woke up screaming—this happens for a while, and then it stops. You'll be OK.

6. Blueberry Muffin #12: The woman at Studebagels in South Bend whose son wanted to be "beat up" for Halloween. It was hard, she said, to give him black eyes and a neck gash, even though it was facepaint.

5. Matmos, who sing about Solanis and use roses for percussion. Glenn Kotche, who found pitch with cicas. Haruko Nishimura, giving birth to a bird. Matt Sullivan, getting old black men paid. The life raft that is the Gossip, and the number of times we pounded "Yr Mangled Heart" into our breastbones.

4. Sober sex is good sex, too.

3. Blueberry Muffin #37: The doughnut sculpture at Seattle's Discovery Park, where all the Filipino/a drag queens used to smoke. Eleni made a box from scratch. It rained, and the apple wine gave us a stomach ache.

2. 2:06 AM, sometime in August. You were moving next-day, so we stayed awake, boxing things, and scrubbing refrigerator drawers, then stopping for a last time on the swings. Pork blood and cherry pop-sicles drip the same kind of red, and I am vegetarian, but it didn't matter.

1. First night in Chicago, when I suddenly felt young and ate all bright food: orange Tootsie Roll pops, a sandwich with American cheese and mustard and tomatoes. We walked down a quiet street, and he talked about Jandek, showed me the narthex covered in chipped tile and stars and apostolic mosaic. I still do not know if Jesus is talking to me, but sometimes I am less hungry.

#### TOP 10 REASONS WHY WE WON'T SIGN YOUR BAND

BY TOMMY CAMARO, CEO OF HEWHOCORRUPTS INC.

1. You do not have over 100,000 friends on MySpace.

2. The credit check we ran on your band came back unfavorable.

3. When we referred to your band as an asset you gave us a funny look.

4. You did not agree with our policy

of having to produce 10 records in two years.

5. You thought us asking you to tour 363 days out of the year was too demanding.

6. You weren't gracious when we told you you didn't have to play a show on Christmas or New Years.

7. When we asked you for your Myspace address you gave us the address to your house.

8. One of your street team members failed our third party background check.

9. You were turned off when we brought up having you pose nude for our annual label calendar.

10. You took too many free mints while leaving our office.

#### CHUCK DUKOWSKI'S TOP 10 QUOTES AND CONCEPTS (AKA CHUCK DUKOWSKI'S TOP 10, 10 ON TOP, 10 TOP IDEAS AND QUOTES OFF THE TOP OF MY HEAD FOR THE '06)

BY CHUCK DUKOWSKI, PUNK LEGEND

1. The Revolution sucks.

I was a fervent believer in revolution, but when I shifted my perspective from "the group" to the individual I started to see what bullshit it was. All regular people suffer when there is violent change. And we are, every one of us, regular people. The revolution makes a bunch of people die and suffer to be robbed and raped by a new group of leaders. Then they have to start over building their lives. Non-violent change is the only answer. Real change ain't no quick fix. Violent revolution is the crack of change. Real change is not about leaders or politics. It's about you and me. It's on the ground.

2. We hold these truths to be self-evident: Nice is good. Mean is bad.

It's self-evident. Nice is underrated and it's the answer.

3. In these times of Victims and Executioners it is the job of thinking people to not be on the side of the executioner.

Albert Camus said this and it is as important today as it was in his time.

4. Maybe Partying Will Help?

This is the title of a Minute-men song by D Boon. Partying does help. Getting some community and good feeling going contributes to the positive forces in humanity. It helps break down the distrust and alienation that provide the fertile soil that oppression and hatred need to prosper. Let's get together!

5. Remember the Maine.

The US government blew up its own ship, the Maine, and blamed it on the Spanish. They used the Maine explosion, in which many, many soldiers died, as a pretext for the massive land grab that was the Spanish-American War. Our nation has a history of war under manufactured pretenses. How many died for greed then? How about now?



6. "Not necessarily the only way to navigate this open field."

This is a lyric from The Evens first album. Ian Mackaye and Amy Farina are on target again. Life's doors are closed only when you let them be. Make your own path and respect the unique beauty of everyone else's.

7. The "real world" is a lie.

Have you ever noticed that when people talk about "the real world" it's always something bad? As though only mean things were real? I've noticed this "real world" lie is most often directed at kids. As in "when you get out in the real world people won't be so forgiving." Screw that. In my "real



# PERSONAL

world" I get to be nice and people are nice to me.

8. All that anybody knows are the fruits of what they sow.

I realized that the way one thinks about and acts in the world comes back at them. If you think people are fundamentally evil you'll find a way to see the world that reinforces that. Open your eyes to the selflessness and love of everyday people. Sow some seeds of good, of beauty, of creation, of love!

9. We are change. Everything we do matters.

The universe is dynamic. Change just is. So then the nature of that change is the all-important thing. We need to try to make everything we do a part of the solution instead of a part of the problem.

10. The Price of Paradise is stained with blood / All pawns and puppets of flesh and bone / Will die for their leaders far from home. / These are men who die very young / afraid to see that their cause is unjust. / Why couldn't they live for life? / Not die to lie.

D Boon sang this on the Minute-men's 3 *Way Tie*. We love you D. We could use your voice nowadays.

(11. ¡Sí, Se Puede!!)

From the immigration rights marches that shut down large parts of LA a couple of times this year. The government can't own us.)

## TOP 10 REASONS TO LAY ON THE COUCH

BY JESSE REKLAW, COMICS ARTIST

10. I'm re-re-re-re-reading *Catcher in the Rye*

9. Snoooooore

8. It works for the cat

7. Those *Love and Rockets* books were a steal on Craigslist

6. Watchin' that spider

5. The heating pad just got warm

4. Kieslowski's *Decalogue* is TV for geniuses

3. Just a minute, OK?

2. Designing polyspatial environments in my head

1. Fuck the world

## MY TOP 10 OF 2006

BY ZAK EINSTEIN, THICK RECORDS

1. Riot Fest 2006 with Naked Raygun and The Blue Meanies

2. *Jackass 2*

3. Model Actress EP (Phillips, Mead, Monostereo, + Yow, Schmersal, etc.)

4. Tool—*10,000 Days*

5. Power Chord Academy summer sessions

6. Eagles Of Death Metal—*Death By Sexy*

7. Shanna Kiel & Black Fur—Orphan

8. Los Punkinhez (Mike Watt, Money Mark, John Wicks) 9/7 at Spaceland in LA

9. Band Of Horses

10. The 2006 Chicago Bears



## TOP 10 THINGS I'VE SEEN IN NIIGATA CITY, JAPAN

BY JEN PAPPAS, FREELANCE WRITER, LANGUAGE INSTRUCTOR

1. A choir of children rehearsing in the shallow, green meadow of Hakusan Park at lunchtime. Each child in matching blue pinafores, harmonizing for an audience of one.

2. Pre-packaged hot-dog buns filled with rice at the local 7-11.

3. The woman wearing stilettos and holding an umbrella, riding her bicycle through the rainy streets.

4. The giant cicada clinging to a tree, squirting its only venom at me in self-defense while I frantically tried to sketch it one evening shortly before sunset.

5. The small, pig-tailed girl riding her unicycle in some sort of hectic circle near the Niigata City Library.

6. The Sea of Japan rising up suddenly as I neared the crest of a hill. Blue, plain, completely calm, bunkered by jetties and families in one-piece bathing suits.

7. The procession of Japanese men and women in traditional costume, hefting a miniature shrine through the streets atop their shoulders. Red with exertion, chanting in tongues.

8. The large, wooden cribs lining the walls of the City Office Building, waiting for children.

9. The smell of hot chestnuts for sale at the Annual Toyosaka Festival.

10. The first time I sat on the bank of the Shinano River, realizing that now, my suns will set in the east.

## MY TOP 10 HEROES OF 2006

BY HEATHER WHINNA, FILMMAKER, INDEPENDENT PROMOTER

1. Ann Richards

Best quote ever "After all, Ginger Rogers did everything that Fred Astaire did. She just did it backwards and in high heels"

2. John Peel

Introduced so many of us to music for nearly 40 years

3. Corey Rusk

Continues to put out excellent records the same way he did 25 years ago

4. Mukhtaran Bibi

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mukhtaran\\_Bibi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mukhtaran_Bibi)

5. Michael Dahlquist

the most happy-go-lucky guy I ever knew

6. Russ Feingold

[www.archipelago.org/vol6-2/feingold.htm](http://www.archipelago.org/vol6-2/feingold.htm)

7. Etta Baker

[www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4536802](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4536802)

8. Zainab Salbi

founder of Women For Women International

9. Michelle Obama

[http://obama.senate.gov/news/051224-qa\\_with\\_michelle\\_obama/index.html](http://obama.senate.gov/news/051224-qa_with_michelle_obama/index.html)

10. Charles E Whinna IV

My feminist father

## TOP 10 TOP 10 LISTS MADE OF 2006

BY KEVIN DUNEMAN, THE BIRD MACHINE BUSINESS MANAGER, FREELANCE DRUMMER

10. Top 10 things I slept thru because I couldn't get up in the morning because it was only, like, the best summer ever. Except for all that war and death and disease and

treachery and foolish spending and affectless bending of reason.

9. 10 top hotels in the New England corridor that rhyme with "strife and hum"

8. Top 10 "moments" from the void

7. 10 top tortas on the Northside of Chicago

6. Top 10 reasons to include raw garlic in every meal

5. Top 10 reasons the world should go metric

4. 10 top pop physicists

3. Top 10 reasons why the music died and was therefore immediately revived

2. Top 10 truly hilarious things John Dawson's beyond John Dawson said and how well they were timed

1. Top 10 number 1's from all my top 10 lists from 2006, and why they always end up being the same thing

## TOP 10 TRENDS I TRIED SO HARD TO RESIST IN 2006. I FAILED

BY JANE FELTES, PRODUCER, THIS AMERICAN LIFE

10. Moving to New York City

9. Skinny Jeans

8. Bangs

7. Giant purse

6. Rick Ross

5. Giant sunglasses



4. A Marc Jacobs dress . . .

OK, not really Marc Jacobs, it's Marc by Marc Jacobs. From a warehouse sale. Whatever! It's cute and makes me look all flat-chested. Shut up.

3. Carrying around a tiny exotic furry animal.

He's from Secaucus, NJ. Ooh la la . . .

2. Leggings [sic]

1. Gun pendants



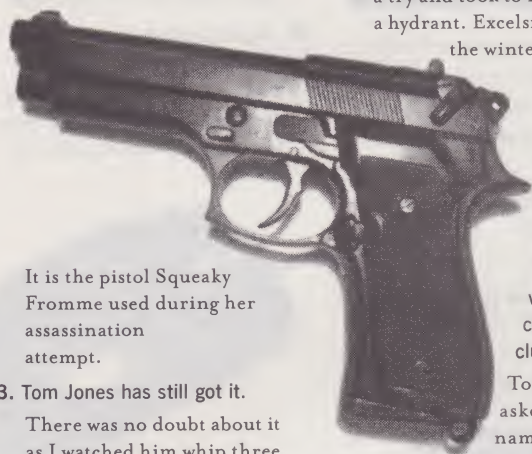
## TOP 10 FAVORITE THINGS I LEARNED ABOUT MYSELF AND/OR THE WORLD IN 2006 (NO ORDER)

BY **ROB MILLER**, CO-OWNER/CO-FOUNDER BLOODSHOT RECORDS, CHICAGO IL

1. I finally found my magic potion, my sine qua non for making airline travel less horrifying

2 valium, one Ambien, and three pints of beer in the terminal ten minutes before boarding. Huzzah! Bring on the turbulence!!

2. After an hour of observing from a bench in the somewhat underwhelming Gerald R Ford Presidential Library in Grand Rapids MI, there is only one artifact that *every* one stops to look at.



It is the pistol Squeaky Fromme used during her assassination attempt.

3. Tom Jones has still got it.

There was no doubt about it as I watched him whip three generations of ladies into hormonal frenzies at Ravinia this summer.

4. My favorite word of the year (I came across it reading "Moby Dick"): amberggris.

It is the unctuous substance formed around the undigested beaks of squids in the lower intestines of sperm whales. It was used in the women's cosmetics industry as a fixative agent. Who thought that might work? God Bless American ingenuity!

5. Chicago has reached critical mass in terms of street fairs.

Enough. No more. The warm, over-priced beer in plastic cups doth no longer ease the pain of seeing so many guys in mandals (male-sandals) that I usually go to scummy rock

clubs to get away from. The novelty of seeing a good band in the daytime, outdoors, has lost its appeal.

6. The German manufacturer of the anti-graffiti coating used on Berlin's Holocaust memorial is the same company that manufactured the Zyklon B used in the gas chambers.

The irony of multinational corporate depravity continues to astound.

7. I learned how to downhill ski.

Several years ago I got convinced by some Portland, OR new age, hippie trash of the superiority of snowboarding. After never getting the hang of it—being told I just had to wait for "the chill," I gave downhill a try and took to it like a dog to a hydrant. Excelsior!! Bring on the winter!

8. No matter how long I do this, a musician will always find a way to surprise me with that special brand of cluelessness.

To wit, when asked by an unnamed guitarist how things were in "the biz," I replied by saying that I felt like Sisyphus a lot of time. At this, he looked thoughtfully at me, and said, swear to god, "yeah, I hear ya. I've heard that's a bad STD, but I never had it."

9. I read *East of Eden* for the first time and Steinbeck may have topped Twain from his long-standing position as my favorite author.

Perhaps, just perhaps, that my reactions to social outrages and disparity are growing from glib and snide satire to action and solutions. Maybe I am finally growing up. Probably not.

10. Americans will eat anything if you provide them a dipping sauce.

*It's been an edifying year.*

## (MY OTHER) TOP 10 HEROES OF 2006

BY **HEATHER WHINNA**, FILMMAKER, INDEPENDENT PROMOTER

1. Kim Deal & Kelley Deal

For being excellent, confident role models without ghettoizing themselves

2. The Miller/Tweedy family

The most financially generous family I know

3. Martha Plimpton

Unbelievably honorable and continues to make great art with such ease

4. Stephen Colbert

Due to his White House Correspondents' Dinner speech

5. Steve Albini

After 25 years possibly the only "producer" who has made several multi-platinum selling records and refuses to take royalties

6. Fred Rogers

Who continues via re-runs to introduce racial understanding to children

7. Timothy Duffy

Founder of the Music Maker Relief Foundation

8. Andrew Alexander

Owner of The Second City who's generosity is unparalleled

9. Upright Citizen's Brigade Theatre

They run a theatre based on the Rusk/MacKaye philosophy

10. Ian MacKaye

Performs & runs a record label on the same honorable system he started 26 years ago

## TOP 10 NUMBERS BETWEEN ONE AND 10

BY **MIKE NOVAK**, PUNK PLANET DESIGNER

10. 10

9. 9

8. 8

7. 6

6. 5

5. 3

4. 4

3. 7

2. 1

1. 2

# SEX

## TOP 10 STUPID/DISTURBING/OFFENSIVE SEX PRODUCTS OF 2006

BY **SEARAH DEYSACH**, PUNK PLANET SEX COLUMNIST, OWNER OF THE FEMINIST SEX SHOP EARLY TO BED

1. Semen-Flavored Lube called Jizz
2. Luscious Legs leg-shaped vibrator
3. One-use disposable vibrators
4. One-use disposable masturbation sleeves
5. Crab-shaped vibe that clips onto the labia
6. Dissolving strips that numb your throat so someone can jam their cock down it
7. Apple martini flavored lube
8. Bean-shaped anal beads
9. Vibrator that speaks French
10. "Uncle Stevie's Fucking Vibe" (shaped like a hand giving the finger)

## TOP 10 LINES I WROTE AS A 22-YEAR-OLD PORNOPHILIST THAT, IN HINDSIGHT, ARE UTTERLY DISTURBING

BY **JOSHUA M. BERNSTEIN**, PUNK PLANET CONTRIBUTOR

1. She drank enough sperm to feed Luxembourg for a week.
2. Jason rode his dad's red ass like a cowboy at the last roundup.
3. Shove your egg roll in my combination box, soldier.
4. Her legs were like a 7-Eleven: always open.
5. I was Columbus exploring her virgin body, deeply planting my flag where it belonged.
6. Gorillas had nothing on Jenny's hairy snatch.
7. Their sex was like monsoon season: long, wet and unspeakably filthy.
8. Mike's penis was as crooked as San Francisco's Lombard Street.
9. Jimmy blasted off with enough force to send Neil Armstrong back to the moon.
10. I like eating my mom's pussy better than her homemade apple pie.



# TECHNOLOGY

## TOP 10 THINGS PUNK ROCK COULD (RE) LEARN FROM THE OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARE MOVEMENT

BY DANIEL SINKER, PUNK PLANET FOUNDER AND PUBLISHER

In relaunching PunkPlanet.com this year, I dove head-first into the Open Source Software Movement—a growing legion of programmers and developers committed to creating shared software free to download and powerful as all hell. It's a concept cribbed straight out of punk rock. In this day and age of big-budget punk, Open Source Software offers a lot of object lessons in how to do things right (once again).

### 1. There's power in numbers.

Stop going it alone. Realize that there are other people out there who can help pick up where you leave off. It's hard to take on a project as big as running a show space or a zine by yourself. Ask for help.

### 2. Stop hoarding your knowledge.

If you've learned something, share what you know with those who don't. We don't need to reinvent the wheel every time someone wants to start a record label. Remember the Simple Machines flyer about starting a label? We need that back again.

### 3. Don't be afraid of updates.

With how people listen to music undergoing a massive reinvention, I find more and more people in the underground clinging to the physicality of records and CDs. They're beautiful, yes, but they're going away. Historically, we're at about "ways of listening to music v6.3" Don't be afraid of 7.0.

### 4. Share and share alike

This leads from #2, but seems like it's worth its own line. Sharing knowledge is a two-way street. Once you've figured something out, it's on you to pass that information along.

### 5. Communities are powerful

Maybe this seems obvious in this day and age of 5000-name "friends" lists on MySpace, but those aren't real communities,

they're just lists. Why not start forming communities of label owners? Of touring bands? This can be localized, or electronic. Either way, they're communities that would learn and influence each other (GigPosters.com is a perfect example of a working community like this).

### 6. Be agile

Part of why Open Source has emerged as something other than a hobby for brainiacs is because the lumbering giants of software—the Micro-softs etc—can no longer adapt quickly enough to new things. Remember when punk was able to adapt so quickly that it was basically able to create new things from whole cloth? Let's go back to that.

### 7. Don't worry about scaling until you need to

We've reached a point in the underground where seemingly every band burdens themselves with a publicist, a booking agent, a label and a crate's worth of press releases before they've even played a show. That's a burden on everyone involved. Don't worry about having the trappings of larger bands until you become those larger bands (and even then, question whether you need them anyway).

### 8. There's room for everyone

Getting stuck in a rut of concepts and tightly hewn-genres is never good for any culture (just look at the hippies, folks). Allowing new ideas in is the only way to continue to grow punk rock. New ideas—new music, new art, new writing, new whatever—beget new ideas. Closing yourself off from them promises that you'll be stuck in a singular moment in time forever.

### 9. Borrowing ideas is different than stealing them

Ideas, when put out there, are meant to be borrowed, re-written, turned on their head, improved upon, and re-injected into the community for

further re-use. This magazine is a perfect example of taking a pre-existing template and turning it into something new, and something others can grow their ideas from.

### 10. Money isn't everything.

Tattoo that one backwards on your forehead so you see it every morning when you're brushing your teeth. Sure, projects cost money, and everyone would love to not work their shit job, but we're long past those requirements when record labels buy Hummers to do their promotion and bands are signed solely for their income potential.

## TOP 10 WIKIPEDIA ENTRIES FOR 2006

BY JON RESH, DESIGNER/WRITER

1. "Burgertime"
2. "Felching"
3. "Inherently funny word"
4. "Gay Fuel"
5. "Wife carrying"
6. "Ass antlers"
7. "Stinky tofu"
8. "List of notable psychedelic self-experimenters"
9. "Goregrind"
10. "Sonny The Cuckoo Bird"

## TOP 10 WEB SITES I'M OBSESSED WITH

BY DOUGLAS WOLK, FREELANCE WRITER

1. Diesel Sweeties ([www.dieselsweeties.com](http://www.dieselsweeties.com))

The best daily comic strip on the Internet.

2. Chris's Invincible Super-Blog ([the-isb.blogspot.com](http://the-isb.blogspot.com))

Unbelievably funny analysis of old superhero comics.

3. Destination Out ([destination-out.com](http://destination-out.com))

A real education in free and experimental jazz.

4. Cliptip ([cliptip.blogspot.com](http://cliptip.blogspot.com))

A curated link site for music videos—and not generally lo-fi YouTube videos, either.

5. Jog—The Blog ([joglikescomics.blogspot.com](http://joglikescomics.blogspot.com))

Superbly written comics reviews.

6. Moistworks ([www.moistworks.com](http://www.moistworks.com))

The highest hit-to-miss ratio of any active audio-blog.

7. nighttime // anytime (it's alright) ([maireadcase.blogspot.com](http://maireadcase.blogspot.com))

Chicago writer Mairead Case's poetic, incisive personal blog.

8. WorldChanging ([www.world-changing.com](http://www.world-changing.com))

Futurism, environmentalism and smart, practical thinking about how to improve the future.

9. The Dylan Pool ([pool.dylantree.com](http://pool.dylantree.com))

A betting pool based on what songs Bob Dylan is going to play onstage on any given night.

10. Vegan Lunch Box ([veganlunchbox.blogspot.com](http://veganlunchbox.blogspot.com))

Mostly defunct but fascinating document of the extraordinary lunches one woman packed for her son.

## TOP 10 NONSENSICAL SPAM SUBJECT HEADERS I RECEIVED IN MY EMAIL INBOX IN 2006

BY JON RESH, DESIGNER/WRITER

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3. I know sex isn't love, but it's an attractive facsimile
4. Gizzard drool
5. If your kids are chunky
6. Don't Panic. The Earth is just being demolished for a hyperspace bypass.
7. Fucking St. Valentine: turgid
8. Bombastic plunger
9. Colorful Emo Fantasy!
10. Apartment nine cocaine scoop





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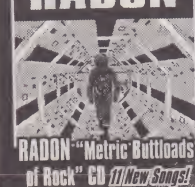
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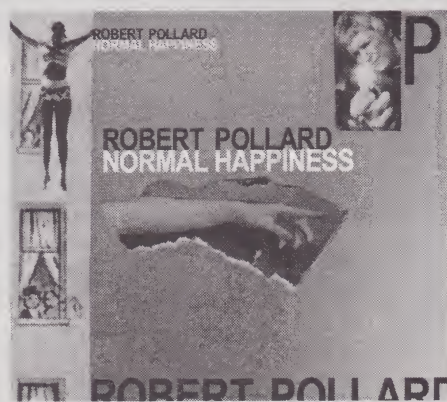
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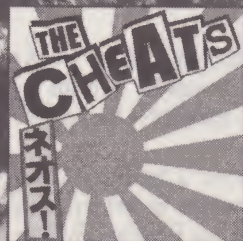
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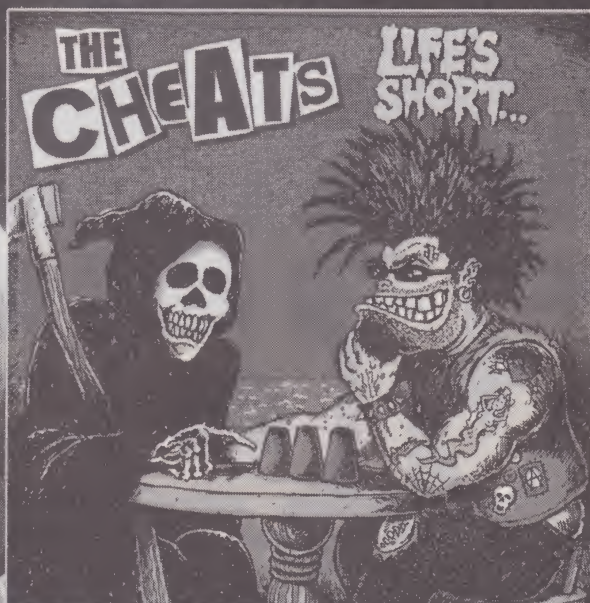
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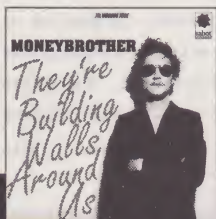
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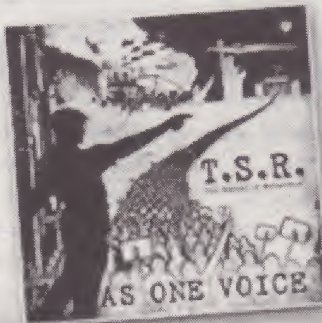
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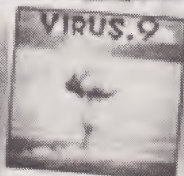


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**T**he sex worker activist: an increasingly common character. Defying stigma, she fiercely denies that her job(s)—stripper, fetish indulger, call-girl—make her a victim. She might look to hook up with others doing similar work, “out” or not, to get together and shoot the shit, recounting the incredible and the humdrum. Not just coffee klatches, these groups have the capacity to organize over workers’ rights, negotiating the terms of their labor in the same way other disenfranchised groups have done. Some, in fact, have launched some very successful campaigns (run and see the documentary *Live Nude Girls Unite!*). More often than not, these women identify as feminists—many calling the work itself empowering—and are thus motivated and equipped to flip off the frowning appraisals of the sex industry that have dominated most feminist thought for decades.

### The Story

During an unexpected jaunt to the South side of Chicago at 2 a.m. in a 1977 Lincoln Continental, I got to talking with the girl sitting in my lap. I’d talked to her before, but tonight we were full of gin and in close-quarters. She was a nice Jewish girl—educated at Cornell, former UFCW organizer and current law school applicant—who had a lot to say about her crotch. To be accurate, she had a lot to say about crotches. Our fellow inhabitants of the Continental—liquored up, yelling together in hearty, mixed-dialect Spanish—hardly seemed to remember we were in the car, let alone paid any attention to her blab. Despite her audience of one, she enunciated declaration after declaration as if she were standing at a lectern. Curly-haired, with heavy-lidded eyes and boisterous cleavage, identity politics articulated with goose-step polish, here was Lisa\*, Sex Worker Activist.

The Continental kept on roaring down the Dan Ryan. Lisa was both didactic and digressive. She free-associated all the way from the stylistics of prostitution to *bacterial vaginosis*. All sex workers, in her estimation, are artists, and all artists worship the same god: money. Although—*ha ha*—there’s no such thing as a starving artist stripper. Phone sex, her forte, requires artisans, stylists of both the sweet-nothing and the crude word, who craft their calls to keep ‘em from getting off just long enough to make a decent profit. Which you need to afford birth control these days. Which should be subsidized by the government. Along with sex ed, so someone will tell these girls to stop douching, for fuck’s sake.

The Continental, its wide girth hugging onto a lane and a half, was heading steady down Halsted. Lisa continued delivering her wildly swinging primer on the Postmodern Pains of Woman. Tina, meanwhile, with one hand on the wheel, the other twirling her hair, was expertly negotiating the art of sitting cool at a red light while a car full of men and marijuana smoke sat in the parallel lane, humming with piqued interest and sexual bravado. She pulled off her Newport with slow control, allowing her head to swivel just slightly to glance coolly in return, then eyes back to front, concentrating on the light’s timer. Ana, older, louder, and in the front passenger seat, was less interested in maintaining such form. She sat twisted in her seat, facing Tina and the car, openly mocking.

“Why those fucking guys staring in at us? Tina, stop showing them your *chocha*!” She threw back her head to emit a succession of

high-pitched barks. Her dark curls fell back to reveal a drunken smear of laughter. Tina laughed roughly, and tossing her hair over her shoulder, allowed the men to see her smile.

Lisa smiled, close-mouthed. Her sexual confidence had been overtaken by a distinctly different manifestation being exhibited by Ana and Tina. I could guess at what she was thinking: *You save that kind of bluster for a hustle, you don’t just splay it out in the everyday*. Lisa played lascivious with her politics firmly attached, though she’d probably deny it. It’s safe to say that Ana or Tina, pragmatists, would agree with a lot of what Lisa had to say about selling sex, but they’d shrug it off as something obvious, a concept that doesn’t require a lot of verbiage to legitimate. But Lisa was often best when she’d unpack her ideas like the barrel and muzzle out of a rifle kit, locking the instrument together while eyeing her target.

We all knew each other through work—as healthcare assistants in an abortion clinic. It was necessary for all of us to work closely: in emotional capacities, providing advocacy and support for women that came to our clinic, explaining the process—everything that both could and could not really be explained; in technical capacities, assisting doctors in procedure, cleaning and sterilizing instruments, taking blood samples and vital signs, performing ultrasounds; and in menial capacities, disposing of biohazardous gunk, scrubbing steel and Formica, managing the occasional brawl between a patient and her boyfriend. What this work led to in the day after day toil, no matter who you were before you started working there, was a sharply honed, fearless, crude sense of humor.

We had developed an insular subculture, made so by the general discomfort most outsiders feel when talking about abortion. Most seem to imagine that each workday for us is like enacting scenes from a tragic opera. To reveal that we spend a lot of the time cackling, guffawing, and sometimes speculating on each other’s pubic hair (Loud coworker #1: “I bet Una’s got a retro muff.” Loud coworker #2: “No, I bet she trims that shit. Everyone who shops at J-Crew shaves their pussy.” Una: “Shut up, bitches. My bush is sacred.”) doesn’t jibe with the expectation that we are either feminist earth mothers that sacrifice all for the better of humankind or militant footsoldiers, performing our functions with steely determination.

The truth is that some of us initially resemble the former archetype, some belong more to the latter, and that these identifications slip away completely for most of us after putting in enough time with the realities of public health work. Speaking openly about sex in every imaginable context becomes the only universally shared agenda. And it is most definitely an agenda. You can see the way a new employee begins to revel in the newfound freedom of talking about whether she has removed stray hairs found around her areola, or on the immediate after-effects of anal penetration.

### The Transition

Naturally, through the culture of no-holds-barred dirty talk, all taboos eventually break down, and you become privy to the most intimate details of your coworkers’ lives. And it becomes apparent that many of the clinic’s workers, like Lisa, have done other work that leads to being more attuned to the smutty quip. Performing





# DIRTY TALK.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN RADICAL SEX WORKERS GET  
TOGETHER TO TALK SHOP? ALMOST ANYTHING.

BY AMANDA KRUPMAN



in peep-shows one summer in San Francisco. Getting a second phone line for getting people off. Brandishing a riding crop and sticking stilettos into willing flesh for \$90/hr. Though some offer up these stories faster than others, no one chooses to couch their dirty talk in qualifications or with any affected modesty.

This particular abortion clinic on the North side of Chicago may be a relatively rare safe space for these kinds of revelations. Many of the clinic's workers would not feel comfortable talking to outsiders about their past or present engagement in prostitution or other "deviant" or radical sex. Even, or especially, around others claiming progressive politics. Some of the women who are both clinic workers and former sex workers wouldn't even call themselves feminists. Perversely, these women may feel freer to share their experiences than the women that fall in between these camps—the self-identifying feminists who have not crossed over into making frank discussion or defense of their sex work part of, or at least compatible with their feminism. It makes you wonder just how many young women—third wavers, postfeminists, et al—actually are or have been engaged in sex work on the sly while remaining dedicated to feminist activism. This question led me to search for women willing to talk.

### The Research

The pornography debate within feminist discourse is a notoriously tail-chasing one. Are women necessarily made victims by pornography? Well, what constitutes pornography? Should feminists spend their energies protesting the existence of strip clubs and prostitution? Or should they participate in harm-reduction programs for workers and back programs that aid strippers and other sex workers in improving working conditions? In the recent past, most of the problems were worked out in separate spheres, with feminist writers dialoging with other feminist writers, and sex workers working amongst themselves. There were a few notable exceptions that broke through, like Scarlot Harlot and Annie Sprinkle, two sex workers turned performance artists/educators who illuminated the hilarious and joyous side of sex work.

In the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, it became clear that a crusade started by a few trenchant pioneers had taken hold. There was now a concerted effort by the young women doing sex work to forcefully rip away the stigma, if only to feel more free to

be visible in defending workers' rights and being "out." Defending kinky sex and freedom of fantasy, and then repositioning the feminist (and Socialist, Marxist, and scores of other modifiers) critique of sex work's economics placed high on the third wavers' agenda—which could now exist within sex worker rights' groups and other sex worker based communities. Sex workers were finally speaking for themselves, and though they were still subjects of research and analysis by outsiders, they were beginning to organize and offer their own political response. This could incorporate feminist influences, and it often did.

A lot of the writing that began to be anthologized and published in mainstream magazines sticks with the personal: the essays stretch to offer a phenomenology of a feminist sex worker. Others have more specific targets, often criticizing media portrayals of sex work as simplistic, at best, and well-meaning programs that offer alternatives to prostitution as off-base or in need of reform.

Dana is a social worker who has quit providing escort services in the industry so that she can more fully attend to her clients, but still works within the sex industry as an activist. She has presented at numerous conferences, curated sex worker art shows, and is a committed organizer for sex worker's rights. She offered me a paper she wrote in graduate school to read over, in which she asserts:

The majority of what society knows or sees about prostitution is the most visible part of the industry—street prostitution. Yet, even then, street prostitutes are not given a voice in how to define the work they engage in and why . . . Also, most of the research on prostitution [is] conducted on street prostitutes, thus ignoring the experiences of other areas of the sex industry.

Dana further articulated common misconceptions in our interview, and described how they affect the kind of conversations she gets into with friends and colleagues: "As far as 'progressive' or 'liberal-minded' thinkers, the most pervasive argument I encounter is equating trafficking to prostitution. I've also been accused of supporting or advocating for the rape of women because I am pro-sex work, that being pro (choice) sex work."

Minax, a professional dominatrix who leads BDSM classes and workshops in Chicago, and hosts the S-Work Social, a kind of sex worker salon that meets every other month, frankly denies that the



WE'RE FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHTS  
OF ALL SEX WORKERS— FROM THE STREET  
TO THE POLE . . .



two realms are either necessarily linked or mutually exclusive:

Yes, I consider myself a feminist, and I take this approach to my work just as much I would as any other type of work that I might be employed in. To me, being a feminist is not about being a sex worker, it's about being a feminist who also happens to be a sex worker.

Though Minax pointedly avoids making a direct correlation between sex work as feminist work, she effectively implies that there is no reason to believe that identification with feminist philosophy would be compromised or made contradictory by one's involvement in prostitution.

Dana's use of the term "pro-choice" is notable. Sex worker activists like Dana and Lisa are often committed to co-opting this feminist language to articulate their experiences within the sex industry. This activist mentality has no boundaries. Though some women concentrate their activism in sex workers' rights, many others have found that their reproductive rights activism, their public health work, their domestic violence advocacy, their scholarly pursuits, their unionizing efforts—all led them to a better understanding of sex work, and with understanding came the curiosity to, well, get down and dirty themselves. Money was, importantly, *not* the only driving force. This is arguably the strongest point against the classic feminist characterization of sex work as necessarily exploitative because women only get involved because of a patriarchal design that limits women's economic potential. Though the existence of abusive, non-consensual trafficking and prostitution continues to remind us that these generalizations have come about for a reason, sex worker activists are challenged to express the positive aspects of sex work under consensual terms: "There's definitely an alternative, kinky element to it that attracted me at first and continues to attract me," one states. "[It's] a way of expressing myself and a way of integrating into my work the aspects of my personality that enjoy assisting others in their Erotic Journeys. The money is an added bonus," says another. A third agrees: "My initial attraction to the work was more curiosity than money. . . I was intrigued by the world of sex work and was curious to see if I could do it."

Furthermore, a woman having the choice to do sex work carried through into deciding what type of sex work was right for her. As most outsider analysis of sex work focuses on the "visible" forms of street prostitution and exotic dancing, it ignores the vast number of erotic service communities that exist at any given time, which are all subject to high variation in clientele, health concerns, contact rules, and so on. Though there is a lot of crossover, with some workers doing movies, modeling, and escorting simultaneously, many other areas are more particularly suited to certain talents, like *pro-domme* work, fetish indulgence, or burlesque (Interestingly, many of these specific kinds of sex workers distance themselves from the term "sex work" or "sex worker.") So one can be intimately associated with the work, not needing to create distance between themselves and the work they choose to do. Audacia Ray describes why she decided to no longer be an escort: "I spent a few months as an escort and didn't like it very much—I found I wasn't good at relating to my clients, who were mostly lawyers and bankers—two things I have no interest in . . . Doing [sensual] massage was more suited to my personality."

Dana speaks to the difficulties that arise in organizing and community-building for this ocean of workers: "The escorts don't necessarily 'hang out' with the strippers; the strippers don't hang with the street walkers; the street walkers don't hang out with the phone sex operators; etc. . . The sex industry is not as cohesive as it should be, in order to make some change happen in society and societal perceptions."

Minax remarks on another barrier to working together: "There are many movements to work toward more camaraderie among sex workers, but generally speaking, they are provided for people who *self-identify* as sex workers." [Italics mine.]

Community building seems to be a general desire for many sex worker activists. Of course, there are plenty of girls who do not make their sex work part of their overall lifestyle, do it primarily for quick money (this would be mostly everyone), and consciously maintain distance from their work. And most women, even sex worker activists, are discreet about their work, especially when working in social service organizations, women's rights organizations, and other social-justice projects. Minax was fairly sure that her BDSM workshops and general visibility kept her from being on a board for at-risk youth. Dana ran into trouble when a newspaper article chronicling her sex worker art show popped up while she was in school for social work. All the women I've talked with have said they've lost potential lovers and friends when discussing their work. Sex worker activists, though tough, brave, and armed with the most developed senses of humor in the working world, are still not immune to the pervasive stigma they would like to eradicate.

Though there are tensions between anti-prostitution advocates and sex worker activists who narrow in on sex positivity and freedom of sexual expression, they all agree that the most needy women—often addicts, sold into prostitution by mothers or men they're somehow attached to—are the women that most desperately need a voice and help to get out so they can make their own decisions and negotiate their own terms. Dana remarks on the nature of sex work activism and notes how more non-judgmental, practical work needs to be done to assist these women in beating their addictions and escaping from the abuse that keeps them doing sex work because they're offered little to no alternative:

A lot of the younger generation of sex worker rights advocates are jaded by the glitz and glamour presented in the media and the history of the forerunners of the movement here in the US. They fail to realize that we're not only fighting for the rights of escorts, exotic dancers, burlesque performers, phone sex operators, etc. We're fighting for the rights of all sex workers—from the street to the pole . . .

It's obvious that the sex worker activists—the largely feminist-identified, younger women who are not poverty-stricken or working for a fix, maintain a power of choice. Their refusal to be condescended to, fetishized, or lumped in with a different population with a wholly different set of problems is often incompatible with the work they attempt to do alongside those who have feminist aims but deny prostitution can be positive. This keeps them radical and defensive. And sometimes, despite the racy words and whip-smart wit, quiet. ©


\* Some names have been changed for privacy reasons.



"We can judge a society by looking into its prisons." —Fyodor Dostoyevsky

In the era of Joseph Stalin's Russia (1930-1950) there existed a system of institutionalized slavery created from the ranks of the imprisoned. Stalin, no defender of human rights, found it quite easy to burgeon the number of incarcerated. Prison was a place for criminals of all types but common crimes of the day included such things as having the wrong beliefs, saying or writing the wrong things, and affiliating with the wrong people. In this environment of dictatorial intolerance it was easy to find oneself on the wrong side of the steel bars and quickly put to work. This system of prisoners turned into forced laborers at the whim of an all-powerful government and its interests was known as the Gulag.

Ironically this notorious chapter in the history books has resurfaced in the very land that fought so long against this communist style of injustice. Van Jones, a leading activist in the battle to reign in the current infestation of American prisons, has reintroduced this word from the past to draw the stark parallels to what we are now facing in America. "Gulag Economy" is the term Jones uses in his fight to educate the public, but perhaps more familiar to many is the phrase "prison industrial complex."



Akin to the military industrial complex, in this case the aspect of society that has been converted into a profit-making force is people living in incarceration and as it continues to grow in scope the need to dissect the dangers of this trend become more and more urgent. What do we appropriately call a thing that makes money from the imprisonment of others? What terms describe most accurately men or women coerced against their will into working for the benefit of another with no measurable compensation? Is this not slavery by its very definition?

A good thing to consider first is precisely how our system of law and justice is designed. Looking at the Constitution we find in the 13th Amendment these words: "Section 1. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."

A quick glance makes it clear that the Constitution actually condones "slavery." We do, in fact, allow for the presence of slavery in our society as a form of punishment, although presumably under the understanding that the law acts equally toward all. Unfortunately, that presumed equality is not the reality and has become so far from the truth that even civic leaders are overturning death row cases by mandate. George Ryan, Illinois' 39<sup>th</sup> Governor, upon leaving office pardoned the entirety of that state's death-row inmates because there were so many inconsistencies in such cases. The other distinction that the Constitution assumes in the 13th Amendment is that the form of slavery imposed against those incarcerated would serve some sort of government body as opposed to a private individual or other entity with motives of profit. But this particular distinction has now blurred in America and the current "Gulag Economy" is booming in no small part because private interests have been allowed into the prison walls like never before.

The exploitation of those incarcerated for the purposes of profit is not a recent phenomenon in America. As early as the 1890s, public opposition spearheaded by the working class had compelled many states to abolish the use of prison labor for profit. State after state prohibited the sale of goods made by convict labor. In the 1930s, Congress enacted the Hayes-Cooper and Ashurst-Sumner Acts, which outlawed prison labor and made it a felony to move prison goods across state borders. Turning this tide of public opinion on its head, in the 1970s, Supreme Court Chief Justice Warren Burger pushed for prisons to become "factories with fences." Today the "Gulag Economy" revolves around an expanding new generation of government-owned and privately run prisons and the economies that thrive on these prisons. As Van Jones told me in a 2005 interview, "We have built 21 prisons and only one university in the past 25 years." Eve Goldberg and Linda Evans point out in their 1997 article *The Prison Industrial Complex and the Global Economy* that in 1995 alone, 150 prisons were constructed nationally.

What is fueling this level of prison construction, particularly in an era when violent crime has been steadily in decline across the nation? One factor is that prison construction is still a politically popular act designed to make people feel safer and it remains a platform often rewarded in elections. Committing money to the economy of incarceration is presented as proof of a politician's "tough on crime" stance. There's also a perverse economic incentive for the government because the growth of prison populations and the jails





# FACTORIES BEHIND BARS:

## THE AMERICAN GULAG ECONOMY


BY DANIEL LIPPINCOTT





that hold them provide a stimulation of the local economies that surround and serve the prison's needs.

Another aspect of the Gulag economy is the profitable relationship between prisons and corporations. Some of these businesses are among the biggest in corporate America. Prisoners have done data entry for Chevron, made telephone reservations for TWA, sewn blue jeans for Levi's, and made lingerie for Victoria's Secret. They've also made circuit boards, limousines, waterbeds, and countless other consumer products that are used in our everyday lives but the product's tag may only indicate that it was "Made in America." Not surprisingly one of the fastest growing aspects of the Gulag Economy is prison ownership itself. Investment firm Smith Barney is an owner of a prison in Florida. Goldberg and Evans in their article also identify American Express and General Electric as investors of private prison construction in Oklahoma and Tennessee."



As the privatization of prison management has proven its economic viability it has attracted more and more investment from other economic sectors that stand to benefit. Every year new products are created and promoted directly to the prison management industry that produces revenues in the billions of dollars. One recent example is a multi-billion dollar technology specially created by a defense contractor to track cell-phone use by inmates, as recently heard on NPR's *The World*. The defense contractor profits handsomely by selling the technology and the corruption in the prison guard population, which enabled the cell phone use in the first place, will most likely go unresolved. Private prisons themselves strive for increased profits to the point of being considered a good investment on Wall Street. Paul D Van Ness notes in *Distinguishing Facts and Fantasy CCA*—the Correction Corporation of America, the biggest company providing incarceration services in America—that, "In 1992, the company reported a net income of \$2.461 million; in 1997 it reported \$53.955 million, which is a 22-fold increase in 5 years! The annual report says, 'CCA is the sixth best performer on the NYSEs.'" (Reprinted online at [www.metrojustice.org](http://www.metrojustice.org))

**IF AS A NATION WE TREAT  
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However, there is another side of the economic coin that presents prison privatization in a less rosy picture. A growing number of studies show private prisons can often cost the government more than if they had continued to run the prisons themselves. A Florida report estimated the cost of private prisons to Florida taxpayers at \$45.04 to \$47.57 per inmate

per day, while the comparable figure for the state Department of Corrections was \$43.79. Van Ness supports this point citing "an Oklahoma analysis, which found that the cost at a CCA facility was \$42.15, compared to \$29.04 for a state facility."

Another issue of contention is that in many ways these institutions are not serving the interests of the law-abiding workingman and woman in America. Van Jones captures the essence of the situation explaining how "Corporations that won't give jobs to African Americans and Latinos in our communities will work us for pennies on the dollar behind bars, and then, when we get out, say that we are not employable because we are felons. Additionally, prison industries are often directly competing with private industry as exemplified by small furniture manufacturers nationwide issuing complaints that they are being driven out of business by Unicor, which was found to pay prisoners as little as 23 cents/hr while holding an inside track on government contracts. More and more often the best buy for a company's payroll dollar will be found at Rikers, San Quentin, and Folsom.

The important differences between state-run and privately owned prisons go beyond pure economics and leads us into the ethical gray zones of owning and operating human lives. Nonetheless, America today is still in need of a correctional system and in many ways the privatized prisons tamper with one of the most basic functions of government: to apply the law without external bias. A government facility untainted by the presence of profiteering would carry the goal of reducing inmate populations whereas private prisons benefit from having their facilities at capacity. Another concern is that these inherent biases against the prisoner's freedom and minimal third party oversight could lead to artificially extended prison terms or hinder rehabilitation.



The American Gulag Economy's source of product supply is, of course, the "War on Crime." Three decades after the War on Crime began, the United States has developed the prison-industrial complex into a set of bureaucratic, political, and economic interests that encourage increased spending on imprisonment, regardless of the actual need. Steven R Donziger, an attorney who headed the National Criminal Justice Commission in 1996, describes the thinking to Eric Schlosser in a 1998 article, *The Prison-Industrial Complex*, appearing in *The Atlantic*: "If crime is going up, then we need to build more prisons and if crime is going down, it's because we built more prisons and building even more prisons will therefore drive crime down even lower." As long as the War on Crime fervor thrives there is no need for the prison industrial complex to be conspiratorial or behind closed doors.

Another aspect of the War on Crime issue is the "War on Drugs." In California, the top three charges for those entering prison are: possession of a controlled substance, possession of a controlled substance for sale, and robbery. Also relevant is the fact that prison terms for drug-related crimes are now on average surpassing those given for violent crimes. In his 2001 article for *Cannabis Culture Magazine* entitled "US Prison Empire," Reverend Damuzi speaks to this point, "The average sentence for a drug offense is 82.4 months; for sexual abuse, 66.9 months; for manslaughter, 26.8 months; and for theft, 24.6 months. Nationwide, 31 percent of all admissions to state prison in 1996 were drug offenders, according to a 2000 report issued by Human Rights Watch. On *CBS This Morning*, September 13, 1999, citing the extraordinary number of drug offenders in US prisons, General Barry McCaffrey, former director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, decried the creation of what he termed a "drug gulag."

Ending the War on Drugs would severely undermine the justification for all the prisons that now exist. It is easy to see that many interests would be much better served if the War on Drugs continued indefinitely because it creates a constant treadmill of prisoners serving time, leaving with the social stigma of incarceration, often unable to find sustainable work, and eventually returning to the prison system for longer terms. Studies conducted by the Federal Bureau of Prisons from the period of 1987-

1994 reported recidivism rates of 25-70 percent. Alarming race distinctions occur as Black and Latino populations were found to recidivate at three to four times the rate of white men.

There can be no doubt that there is likely a place for incarceration in our society and that there is a very small population may not be trusted to respect the law. But ultimately how can we communicate with authority what is right or wrong while using methods that disrespect or dishonor the wrongdoer's inherent humanity? If as a nation we treat our prisoners as slaves, how could it be that they would return to society with any respect for it? And if one doesn't respect society because its laws are unjust and inconsistent toward them, what likelihood remains that they will live within those laws?

To answer these questions honestly as a nation it would require an immense paradigm shift. We would need to view criminals as people with a special set of needs and an ability to change if helped. We would have to be able to admit that recidivism is a failure on the part of our society as well and not just the individual's burden. We would have to be willing to demand and maintain a system of law and justice that truly treats all people equally. As Van Jones told me, "every century has its moral struggle in regards to race in this country: 1800's was slavery, 1900's was Jim Crow. In the new century this struggle is played out within the incarceration industry."

The societal dehumanization of the "bad guys," which allows most Americans to not consider what it means to have a slave population living and dying in our country today robs us of our own humanity—a humanity and compassion that ultimately each one of us relies on every day of our lives. Were the proverbial tables to turn would we wish to be subjected to the system as it operates today? The goal of our criminal justice system is to uphold a sense of safety and justice in our society. These institutions should not be run using the methods that they are bound to punish in others. We as a society must be willing to turn away from our hypocrisies in order to guarantee at least the potential for a true equality. It must be an equality that extends even to the unwanted, the shunned, and the scorned. Ultimately, real safety and security in our communities will come only from a shift in resources away from these modern prisons with profit margins and toward the creation of a comprehensive safety net both within and without those formidable prison walls. ©



In early 2002, a group of eight Chicago-based artists and activists gathered together to form a radical arts collective called StreetRec. They worked on creating memorable and resistant protest graphics to be disseminated widely for use in public space. Born out of the counter globalization movement and the critically engaged art community, they were interested in making art that would challenge the domination of corporate control and US hegemony. Part of their politics included an embodied critique of the over-valuing of individual competition rather than group collaboration. This cultural tendency is particularly prevalent in the art world in which some of them participated. For this reason, they choose to credit all of the art they created to the collective and not to individual artists. They had no funding or sponsorship. They were simply a voluntary association of engaged artists with some graphic design skills and an offer from a sympathetic printer to help them out.

After several meetings and discussions, the group came to a collective decision to attend the protest against the World Economic Forum (WEF) being held in New York City that February in which they would bring their new creations. One member of StreetRec had seen a *Vanity Fair* photo spread (shot by famous portrait photographer Annie Leibowitz) of the warmongers themselves: George W Bush, Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, and Donald Rumsfeld. They decided to modify and recontextualize these images and create larger-than-life cut out heads to be carried at the protest. A member of the group recalls, "The Annie Liebowitz pictures of Bush and his cabinet were crying out for defacement. We discussed a variety of ways in which we could mutilate these images, from the grotesque to the culturally charged to the satirical . . . and we ended up with a smattering of all three." Little did they know that their visual interventions would travel far and wide and raise complex questions about artistic appropriation, the free use of culture, and the commodification of dissent.

Although StreetRec was appropriating images from a corporate magazine, and therefore impeding on copyright, they were significantly changing the images for not-for profit dissemination for both critical and educational purposes. Thus their use of these images be considered a fair use. Fair use describes conditions under which copyrighted material may be used with out permission and there have been and continue to be long legal battles concerning the specifics of the laws. Regardless of the law, many people in the copyright liberation movement see the ownership of intellectual property for the generation of profits as damaging to the free exchange of ideas. Although created to do just the opposite, in practice most copyright laws protect big corporations and other powerful entities. These laws can be stifling to creative development as well as political dissent. In a way, StreetRec and others like them can be seen as information Robin Hoods: taking from the rich (corporate content providers), and giving away to the poor (grassroots activism and free culture) for social benefits and sharing, not for profit.

The group created three heads approximately four-and-a-half feet high by three feet wide for the WEF protest. A member of StreetRec describes the heads this way: "One—Bush with 'Enron' sutures: arguably the most ghoulish of all the heads, Bush

has a wide cut that splits his mouth well into his cheeks, and has a matching slice across his forehead. These wounds are closed by thick, ugly sutures, the ones on the forehead spelling out 'Enron.' Two—Cheney with the 'Got Oil' moustache: a sloppy oil moustache dribbling over the man's lips, while on his forehead in looping liquid script are the words 'Got Oil?' satirizing a popular ad campaign for milk. Three—Rumsfeld with '3000 Afghani Civilian Deaths': inspired by the infamous *Kings of Punk 12* by Poison Idea, Rumsfeld has the Afghani civilian death toll (at the time of making) carved into his flesh with uneven gashes. It's important to note all of these signs were in lovely grayscale, with the only color being the various wounds and blood." Each also had a teardrop tattoo; a jailhouse symbol indicating the wearer is a murderer. Graphically, these visual mashups were borrowing from and commenting on the media culture they were immersed in to create new meaning and dialogue.

When StreetRec arrived at the WEF protest in NY, one member recalls, "We were amazed at the initial reception of the heads when we walked to the starting point of the march. About 1000 people just started cheering wildly. It was really overwhelming. We knew at that point we had done something really provocative. We had no idea that they would travel like they did." These same heads were also brought to a protest against the Trans Atlantic Business Dialogue, a Chicago anti-war protest, and to a Milwaukee protest with Illinois Peace Action.

With the reception of the first set of heads, and in preparation for the January 18, 2003 national protest against the War in Iraq being held in DC, the group created a new series. This group of images was called "The Four Horseman of the Apocalypse"; this time the same heads had their eyes blacked out and one word across their foreheads: Bush had "War," Rumsfeld had "Death," Cheney had "Pestilence," and Wolfowitz was marked with "Famine." They were also brought to several anti-war protests in Chicago including the International Day of Action against the War, February 15, 2003 as well as protests in other parts of the US.

At all the protests, the signs were documented by various media outlets and the resistant street spectacle entered the corporate media spectacle. Corporate media coverage is a much-debated arena in activist circles. Activists are at once seeking coverage from corporate media because of the huge audience potential and at the same time activists remain suspicious of corporate media's tendency to misrepresent or debase subjects. Certainly StreetRec must have discussed these issues before hand, for the sheer size of the heads and their slickness in a protest context were sure to stand out and make for an excellent photo opportunity. In some circles, this is called Tactical Media, using creative tactics to create a spectacle that the media will pay attention to and thus enter your issues into a larger public dialogue. Regardless of this debate, however, these contemporary protest images spread around the world and Bush's head with the word "War" were intricately linked.

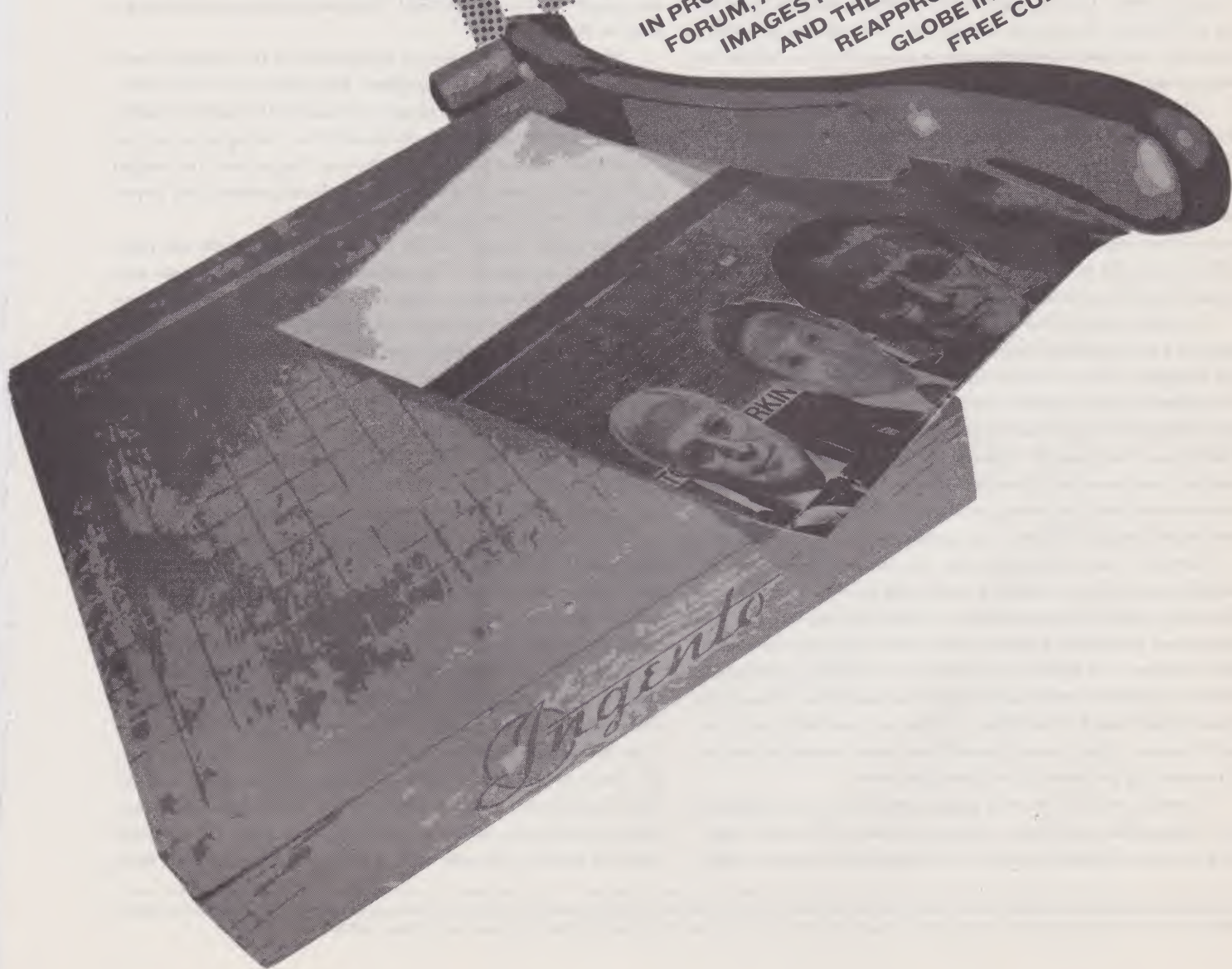
Fellow protestors and the media loved these images more than the artists had anticipated. From *Newsweek* to the *Revolutionary Worker* to the *South China Morning Post* and *The Times of India*—protest photos that included the StreetRec-manipulated heads proliferated around the globe. Ultimately, StreetRec felt their desire to infuse protest with



# Off with Their Heads

BY DARA GREENWALD

IN PROTEST OF THE 2002 WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM, A GROUP OF ACTIVISTS APPROPRIATED IMAGES FROM A POPULAR PHOTOGRAPHER— AND THEN WATCHED AS THEY WERE REAPPROPRIATED THROUGHOUT THE GLOBE IN A TELLING STORY OF HOW FREE CULTURE CAN WORK





newer, slicker graphics worked in communicating their visual and political ideas to the world. It was exciting that with so few resources, a small number of people could penetrate the media landscape on this large of a scale.

With the heads' welcome reception and an intention to spread critical and free culture, the group decided to make the graphics more accessible to other protestors by putting up easily downloadable files on the web. They distributed flyers at the antiwar rally in DC that had a link to a site where anyone could download the images. At the site visitors were greeted with this information and an email address: "Hello! Please feel free to use any of these images for your own activist/non-profit purposes. If they get any press, we'd love to hear/see about it. All images by the StreetRec collective 2002-03." They also posted the link on activist website [www.indymedia.org](http://www.indymedia.org).

Later the group created a video called *Retooling Dissent*, which included a booklet with step-by-step instructions on how to make your own high-quality protest graphics. (See sidebar.) Soon, images of the heads (not just in photos from protests) started to appear in all kinds of places. Independent magazines such as *Lumpen* and *AdBusters* asked to reprint them. They were spotted on multiple websites, show flyers, and T-shirts. To use a marketing term, these images were sticky. StreetRec's intention to distribute these images for free cultural use was working.

Then, one photographer made copyrighted postcards of a photo she had taken of the heads from the WEF protest, and it seemed that issues around copyright and attribution became more complicated. Certainly, StreetRec had appropriated the original photos but had both re-imaged them and made them free for public use. Now it seemed they were getting re-privatized. StreetRec began to see how difficult it can be to in assert and maintain free access to ideas in a culture driven by commodities.

In 2003, *New York Times* op-ed columnist, Paul Krugman came out with a book entitled *The Great Unraveling* published by WW Norton and Company. The US edition had a plain red and white cover and the subhead *Losing Our Way in the New Century*. The UK edition, however, had a collage of images including prominent placement of StreetRec's Bush/Enron head and the Cheney/Got Oil? as well as a different subtitle: *From Boom to Bust in Three Scandalous Years*. Clearly, these different covers were a developed strategy on the part of the marketing department to sell books to different demographics.

StreetRec was surprised to find out about the book cover especially since it was so clearly a marketing move. The images on the cover of the book had not been re-worked in any way and were being used for profit, however critical the book may have been. One member of StreetRec contacted the publishing company to discuss a possible honorarium or credit and asked for at least a few copies of the book for their files. If this book had been a not-for-profit venture, then it would merely have been treated as another of the exciting re-printings of StreetRec's work.

StreetRec weren't the only people concerned with Krugman's cover. Regardless of the books' exclusion from the US market, right-wing journalist Donald Luskin at the *National Review* choose to high-

light the cover images in his column as a way to discredit Krugman's ideas. In a November 24, 2003 piece called "Running From Cover" at [www.nationalreview.com](http://www.nationalreview.com), Luskin writes, "It took a simple picture for the *New York Times* to finally distance itself from America's most dangerous liberal pundit . . . It's a photomontage showing the face of President George W Bush with huge Frankenstein sutures across his mouth and brow, and the word 'Enron' stitched into his forehead. Vice President Dick Cheney's face sports a Hitleresque mustache; the words 'Got Oil?' are scrawled on his forehead. It is a hateful, shocking, and disturbing image."<sup>1</sup>

Even the Republican National Committee weighed in on this cover. Spokesperson Christine Iverson stated in the *New York Times* ("One Book, Two Very Different Covers," Nov 23, 2003, Books 2) that, "The fact that they are using a much different cover here in the United States is proof that his tactics are offensive to mainstream Americans." The *New York Times* also attempted to distance themselves from it, spokeswoman Catherine J Mathis stated, ". . . we were never even shown the cover." And finally Krugman himself, in the same *Times* story said, "It is a marketing thing, not a statement . . . I should have taken a look at that and said 'What are you doing marketing me as if I'm Michael Moore?'"

Whether it was strategic or accidental that the images weren't attributed to the group is unclear. But protest art and underground culture are constantly appropriated by the market, and the publisher would likely have paid handily for the rights to reprint the original photos by Annie Leibowitz. Regardless, the images had reached higher places of power and controversy than any of the artists could have imagined.

The heads brought out for the protests against the war three years earlier resurfaced in November 2005 in a review in the Arts section of the *New York Times*. This time, they were not in a street protest, nor on the cover of a book, but appeared in perhaps an unlikely place, the Museum of Modern Art's PS I in New York as part of an artist installation. The artist, Jon Kessler, had included the Bush "War," Cheney "Pestilence," and Wolfowitz "Famine" heads to cover an entire wall of his installation room. And although his installation was quite elaborate with multiple components including video, electronics, media photos, and sound, the image of the wall with the heads was what critics in both *The New York Times* and the *Village Voice* chose to include in their positive reviews. Members of StreetRec received e-mails from friends asking if they had a show at PS I and/or wondering if they had been credited. None of the artists in StreetRec had had any contact with Jon Kessler.

Jon Kessler, it turns out, had found the images in a book called *The War in Iraq: A Photo History*. The book is a pro-war book published in 2003 with an unfortunate introduction stating, "This new war of liberation lasted only 41 days." Of the over 300 pages of photos, only three have images of protest against the war and it is there, on page 46, that the heads show up. Jason Turner, a photographer with AP Wide World Photos took the picture at the Washington, DC, January 18, 2003 Antiwar Rally—the protest that StreetRec had originally made the heads for. Kessler said, "I bought the image directly from

<sup>1</sup> The *New York Times* also failed to read the Got Oil? reference to the ubiquitous Got Milk? advertising campaign stating "the British jacket bears caricatures of . . . Vice President Cheney with a Hitler mustache. A dark scrawl on the vice president's forehead reads, 'Got Oil?'" Later the *New York Times* published a correction and explained the Got Milk? reference.





The context and intention of use of appropriated culture raises difficult questions about remuneration for the labor of creativity, the nature and value of credit for work, and the means that one has to have a say in its use.

the agency that represents the photographer who took the picture that I saw in the book. I was told that he, the photographer came to see the show . . . I cropped the photo and just used the posters." He chose that image because "There are other pictures of Bush in my show. That one had the power and energy that would have deserved the size that I was planning on blowing it up to." Kessler paid Corbis for other images in the show. Kessler stated that he had no personal position on appropriation. If Kessler had paid a photojournalist who took a photo of a public art piece by a more well known artist such as Jeff Koons, would he have felt as at ease using the images? Perhaps there is something about the way protest art is valued by the gallery art world that excludes even asking this question.<sup>2</sup>

One member of StreetRec responded to the Kessler installation in this way: "There was some exchange via e-mail (with members of StreetRec) about it for a few days but people actually seemed less inclined to do anything than any of the previous instances. This can be attributed to a real distance from the graphics and the group no longer being together. It can also be attributed to the fact that it was a pretty confusing situation as far as it being a critical art installation that was not apparently for profit (though I think we know that his work was actually for sale) . . . I thought it was more interesting and controversial that his work said more about the limits and responsibilities of appropriating radical aesthetics meant for street contexts for art-world contexts. Of course, there are also limits to appropriating *Vanity Fair* aesthetics for protest contexts, and they mainly are that you cannot really (legally) complain much when your shit gets jacked."

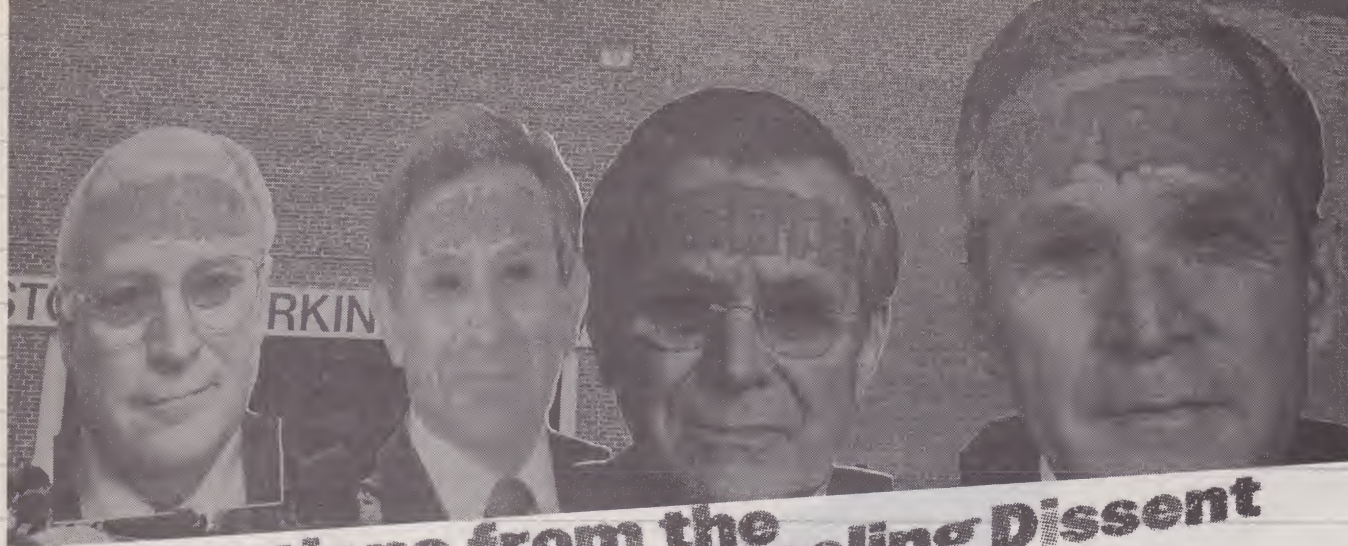
People in StreetRec have had a mixture of feelings about the re-appropriation and re-use of their appropriated graphics. One

member felt, "It was my impression that that project specifically was created for use without copyright or expectation for reward. If someone wanted to misuse a head with a bloody Enron stitched into the forehead, well then I'd like to see that." Another member, on the other hand, felt, "I think it is always fine if someone takes them and reconfigures them, but to use them to sell your book or as your own unmodified 'original' art work, that's bullshit and really damn lazy. Yeah, we took the photos from a famous photographer in the first place, but really modified them and changed them into something hideously new . . ." And another felt that when free, open culture meant for the commons, is taken and copyrighted for the benefit of an individual or a corporation, it is unethical. S/he didn't want credit or money, s/he just wanted the images to remain in the context of a free and open culture. The anarchist sentiment that property is theft extends to intellectual property as well. Not only does StreetRec not own the images, the sentiment goes, *nobody* should.

As the heads continue to have relevance, they have continued to be used in ways that StreetRec intended: by protestors as a means of powerful, visual, public, political expression. Others have taken the images out of the commons and privatized them back into the world of copyright and ownership without changing the design in the least. Appropriation is both an important and inevitable part of a vibrant and living culture. The context and intention of use of appropriated culture raises difficult questions about remuneration for the labor of creativity, the nature and value of credit for work, and the means that one has to have a say in its use. In today's world certainly corporations charge heavily for the use of their propriety material and grassroots culture continues to be robbed not merely of their labor and production, but of their intentions for how a free culture might function. ©

<sup>2</sup> This came out of a conversation with artist Blithe Riley.





# Instructions from the StreetRec Retooling Dissent DIY Booklet

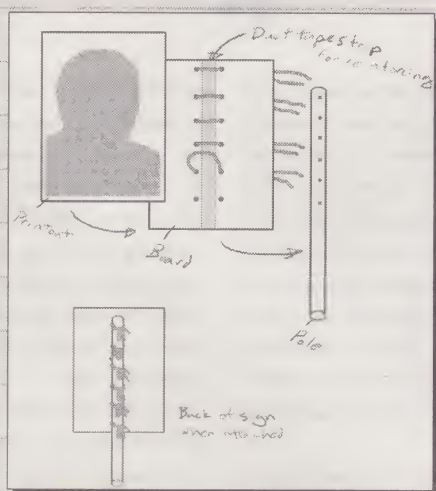
**L**arge scale signs for protest are often either hand-painted banners or professionally created by a print shop. Large-scale computer output could be seen as a middle ground between purely handmade and professionally done protest graphics. If you're familiar with graphics software at all, make a striking sign that will last through several actions can be relatively easy.

The prices for large-scale output can vary widely, so ask around. Copy shops are going to be the main places with these big printers, but some art schools and universities will also have them. They usually take a low-res but large-size file for output. The advantages of computer design and output are:

- You can use photographic images and they will reproduce well in color or black and white.
- The lettering or typography is clear and easily readable.
- The images you create will be able to be reproduced across different media (video, print, web), at different sizes, as much as you want.

So get the file specs (i.e. what document size, what resolution, what file type) from whoever is going to print your file (hopefully for cheap), make a powerful image (defenselink.mil on the web is good for hi-res images of US heads of state and military hardware begging to be purposed), include type if you want, and print away.

Once your sign is printed, you need to mount it on some kind of backing. If it's going to be a long action/march, you'll want to mount it on something light so you can hold it up all day. The best



but most expensive lightweight board is corrugated plastic, also called gatorboard. You can get this at an art supply store - the good thing about this stuff is if the cops start to get violent, it can double as a sturdy shield. However, gatorboard is almost prohibitively expensive, and the next best thing is thick foam core. Also available at art supply stores, foam core is lightweight but substantial, and has a good texture for mounting paper onto. If foam core is still too rich for your blood, I have also had some good results from mounting signs onto thick styrofoam insulation, which has a good strength to weight ratio and comes in huge uninterrupted sheets. It can be a little hard to work with, and you might need to test some various adhesives on it, to make sure they won't melt it.

With this printout/backing board setup, I have experimented with a few different ways to mount the sign to a pole of some kind. The most successful that I've found is to put nylon cord through the backing board and then glue the print on top of it. You drill holes in the board, then poke the cord through with a screwdriver. Remember to cut the cord longer than you think you'll need, you can always trim it later. With these ties, you will be able to tie the sign to a pole of any kind (some cities will only let you take in cardboard tubes rather than pvc pipe or wood). See diagram below:

To glue your print to the board, I find the best glue is a heavy-duty spray adhesive. Spray 77 is a good one, but there are plenty. You'll get a much better price on adhesives at a hardware store than at an art store. Spray down your mounting board with the adhesive, getting a good coat especially at the edges. Once your board has a good coat of adhesive on it, slowly lay your print onto it while someone else smooths it out, being careful the press out bubbles; this usually takes 2 or 3 people to do effectively - two lowering while one smooths.

After you have your ties through the board and the print glued on, for added durability/waterproofing, you should coat the print in spray acrylic clear coat. There are a wide variety of clear acrylics available at the hardware and art store, with the cheaper ones being available at the hardware store. This way if your print gets rained on, the dyes won't run.

Though this process sounds elaborate, once you have the materials you can mount a sign like this in an hour. Good luck and keep up the fight!

**StreetRec** | These heads and other examples of the defacement of powerful people have been used in protest throughout the US, and we have set up a website with multiple download options for the further dissemination of such graphics initiatives. [www.appliedsemiotics.com/heads](http://www.appliedsemiotics.com/heads). As we have presented workshops and screened this video, it has become increasingly clear that we need to pro-

duce diagrams for the StreetRec projects. Although the StreetRec projects are some of the simplest to produce there are many technical issues which could be encountered in the design and material decisions when attempting to appropriate these technologies. Feel free to contact us about any great successes or failures with these projects. [Street.rec@counterproductiveindustries.com](mailto:Street.rec@counterproductiveindustries.com)



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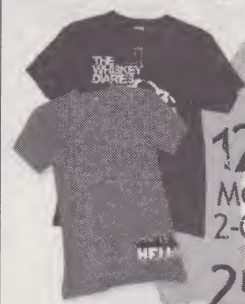


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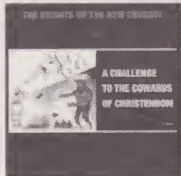
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# THE EVENS



# columns

# PP77

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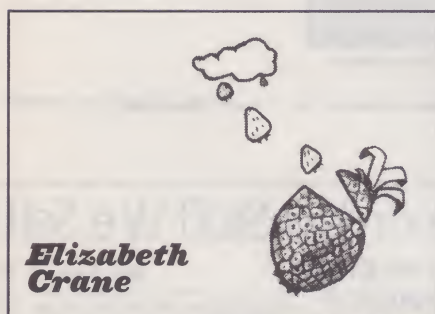
alison wolfe

josh hooten

nomy lamm

larry livermore

johnny temple



**W**hen I was a kid, I thought I would for sure be one of these things:

1) a doctor, like Marcus Welby, MD

2) an impressionist, like Rich Little

3) a police officer, like Angie Dickinson

4) a Broadway star (I wanted to be in *Hair*, without the naked) and of course,

5) married by age 25. Because:

a) that seemed the right amount of old to me, and

b) it had not yet been suggested to me that marriage was anything less than urgent, but also leaving

c) plenty of time for me to establish my career as a singing doctor/detective, and to have kids shortly after that, so that I could be a young beautiful mom like my own, because that seemed important when I was eight, although I don't know why.

Plus also I thought I might move to Italy, or Colorado.

Also, I was sure that this person I would marry would be a movie star, that I *should* marry a movie star, that I *deserved* to marry a movie star, which, in retrospect, perhaps I did, but which is to say

only that my definition of "deserved" has changed. I got as far as dating a few movie stars. Don't let's talk about that.

Somewhere around third grade, having consumed *Harriet the Spy* like an essential nutrient that had been missing, I decided to be a writer. Emphasis here on "decided." I didn't know what kind of writer I thought I'd be, and there were distractions, let's call them, that came in the form of a long list of random unplanned careers, stupid boys, irrational and spontaneous cross-country moves, and a variety of substances. Don't let's talk about any of that either.

Occasionally, I would take a vague stab in the direction of the writing goal. I wrote several (weak, unseen) screenplays. I wrote the sitcom I thought I'd like to see, one I thought was, um, funny, but I didn't show it to anyone. OK, I tried to show it to one person but he refused to look. Mostly, I wrote letters. The letters were actually pretty good. Sadly, there wasn't a big market for letters.

I became a waitress. Waitressing made sense to me, way more than the idea of going to an office somewhere to do whatever it is people in offices do. Shout into speakerphones. However, after several years of waitressing, and with my planned career of being a famous writer in a neutral position, I became tired, and things like sitting down, stapling things and having health benefits suddenly seemed appealing in a job. So I went to work in an office.

A little about this office. Although I spent several years there, I'm certain now that this office job served the opposite of its intended purpose, ultimately helping to facilitate my eventual move away from anything resembling a normal life. The joy of stapling and sitting wore off quickly, and it turned out only the higher-ups



got to shout, and frankly, the overall air of urgency at this entertainment job seemed extremely disproportionate to, you know, the actual urgency of the work. People were regularly seen running down the hall carrying some piece of paper or another, as though the resulting receipt of paper might somehow alter the course of human history. The fact that actual famous people were often present went a long way to completing my disillusionment about what fame was going to do for me. I became appropriately *fearful* of what fame might do for me. I'm already overly fascinated with myself, particularly as a sort of control with which to measure against the rest of the population the relative greatness/badness/weirdness of my life. That anyone else would share my interest in me—and subsequently indulge any me-oriented whims, was a disaster waiting to happen.

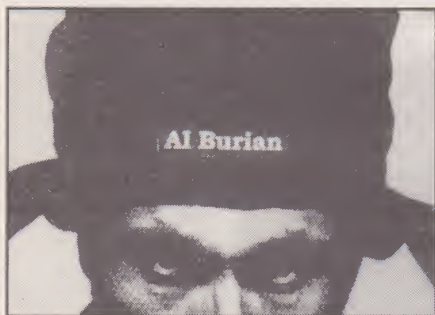
I continued to write, in between staplings. As randomly as anything else, I found myself writing fiction. This one stuck, and it wasn't even any of my lists. I began to put actual effort, effort involving a great deal of time and postage and occasional stapling, but for my own ends, into releasing these stories into the world where they might actually be read. These days, I have a CV. Or what passes for a CV. There was a time, back in the hoping-to-be-Angie-Dickinson era, when I did not know what a CV was. I knew what a CB was. If you'd asked me if I had a CV, I might have replied by saying that I didn't have a car, and we might have had a very awkward, confusing conversation at best. More or less, I make rent doing things I *actually enjoy doing*. Although George Clooney glanced at me one time, no, really, I am not married to a movie star, but I am married, which happened long past 25, at what turned out to

be the exact right time with the exact right guy, which is the only way I can endorse going about it at all. I realize you all figured this out before I did. You may have been born punk. I was not. (Although, in the spirit of economy, a general DIY credo—also known in our family as, “if you want a new dress, make it yourself.” was passed down to me by several generations of crafty ladies, which I have carried on since I was in junior high school.)

Many of these facts and others, surprise me on a regular basis. They surprise me so much as to seem profound. They surprise me so much that a sort of contagion ensues whereby it is possible for anything to surprise me. Even the most seemingly mundane moments do not fly by me unnoticed. There seems to be a weight to everything. Saying something like, “Mmm, coffee smells good,” and knowing that this is an audio transmission that will be received, and likely responded to, by this other person who lives in my apartment. Attempting to grow flowers from seed for the first time and discovering actual sprouts a few weeks later. (Nevermind that this other person I live with, unaware that I had planted these seeds, retilled the soil and planted some seeds of his own, resulting in a crop of cilantro among my petunias.) I know now that a pattern has emerged whereby eventually a seed will sprout, a call or an e-mail will come with a proposal that was not even remotely on my radar in terms of something I planned to do.

Like, I dunno, say, writing a column for *Punk Planet*. Although I have long thought a column of my own would be a dream come true (Letters! To—everyone!), I think I've established here that I'm not on your typical punk path. I ambled down some other, more khaki-toned paths first. But make no mistake. I am on it,





I've only been in the band for two practices and already there is turmoil. The singer wants to kick out the bass player. Things aren't looking too good for the drummer either. If all this terminating

goes down, that will leave me as the long-standing core member, and this as my one-week anniversary in the band approaches.

The singer shows up at my house in the early afternoon, guitar in tow, ready to teach my roommate the bass parts, and to double-check my guitar playing for good measure. He is livid about the other guys, who not only cancelled last Wednesday's practice, but now have discovered scheduling conflicts for our first show, slated to happen in a basement in Rogers Park a few weeks from now. "I can't abide these unreliable people," the singer explains, then concedes, "It's not the drummer's fault. He's OK—for now. We'll have to work on him. He's got these crazy ideas that a college education is going to get him somewhere in life!"

He gestures at the practice amps, lined up against the wall. "Hopefully we can convince him that *this*—" he means not the practice amps themselves, but what they represent: a lifestyle, an ideology, freedom, the touring punk band ethos. "This is the sweet stuff of life, man. These are the important, life-changing experiences. You'll learn more playing in a band than any book or degree or job could ever teach you. We both know it. But if he can't grasp that by, oh, let's say end of the summer—he's OUT!"

As for the bass player, there is just no hope. He has cancelled our band's show for no better reason than a prior commitment to play a show with his other band. "This shows a serious lack of priorities," laments our singer. "I mean, come on. Maybe if it was some great show. But it's a show in *Indiana*, for fuck's sake! Who even books a show in Indiana? What's the point?"

My roommate learns the bass parts pretty quickly, especially considering that she's a country guitarist and has never played bass before. But it's punk rock, the people's music, anyone can do it, and here it is, once again, in its most beautiful and pure form. Half an hour later, we've got a couple of songs down and we are barreling through them. A-E-D, G-D-A, yeah, that's right, you got it, just chug on the A in that part at the end. Punk-rock music has provided me some nice experiences in life: it's allowed me to travel to some wacky places and meet some incredible people. The core of it, though, the real truth of the experience, is here at the starting gate, sitting around the apartment jamming out some tunes with some people you like. I think about the sweet stuff of life, the life-changing experiences: there's not much I

can think of that I'd trade for an afternoon of playing music with my friends.

My first two practices with this band happened in a rented practice space, sterile and functional, soundproofed and with easy access to vending machines. The practice space experience still seems alien to me, something I'd never really experienced before living in Chicago. In North Carolina, we played in basements, frantically, trying to get the song done before the neighbors called the cops. It was inconvenient, it was a hassle, it was unprofessional. I miss those times: the us-against-them feeling, the giddy sense of being on the cusp of cracking a secret code, of re-arranging those same few chords so that, like a tornado tearing through the house, we'd be swept up by it, blown out of the basement and into the world. What is greatness in music, after all, but a subjective assessment of how much pleasure was derived?

Now, as we run through the songs in the living room, things feel right. The connection of synching up on a strumming pattern, a simple set of bar chords, smiling as we look at each other, nodding. "That sounded pretty good!" I say, when the song's over. The singer agrees. "Pretty good. But let's try tightening up the bridge. Take it from the second chorus . . ."

Practice is a success. My roommate is in the band. We go to a bar to celebrate. The singer tells my roommate the extended plan, the shows we've got lined up, the records we're going to put out, the tours we'll go on; I got the same pitch when I joined last week. She acts unfazed, but by time the bar closes up, I can see she's been infected by his enthusiasm. She has begun to dare to dream of what could happen. That makes it especially unfortunate when the bass player calls on the way home, to let the singer know that he has cancelled the show in Indiana so that we can play our show. The bass player is back in. The roommate is out. In the car, a grim, stony silence descends. The ride home is tense and awkward.

"I guess I overreacted," the singer admits. "I probably should have waited a couple of days. I guess I jumped the gun." She is obviously hurt, but acts tough, tells him it's no problem, that she wasn't really that into it anyway, and anyway, whatever. Only moments ago, we were a band, and could lock ourselves into that special band bubble of things we were going to do, potential energy, the group dream. Now she's excluded from that, and so we've run out of things to talk about. Why must things be so complicated? Why must human beings be so foolish and strange? I just wanted to play guitar in a punk band. It seemed so simple when I agreed to it. Like all things worth doing, this is already manifesting itself as 10 times more effort than it should be for the ends that will be achieved. You can't think of things in terms of effort-to-results ratio if you want to get anything done; I've learned that by now. Still, this seems like a lot of heartache for just two practices—three, if you count the one where my roommate was in the band.

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**E**ver get the feeling you've been cheated? Terror and doom punch you in the stomach and throw you in the gutter. It happened to me! (No way!) I haven't been done like this

since my Cheap Trick Record days like 10 years ago. I thought my love life had evolved somewhat—will someone please gimme back my rocking chair?! Not that I haven't pulled my share of shit too, but believe me, I wasn't this bad, and I paid dearly. I was so happy, or thought I was. Not that you need another person to make you complete or happy, but it's nice work if you can get it. Plus I'm a twin anyways, so I gravitate toward the Twinkie life.

It all started with an imposed eggshell "hiatus" then a break up of flimsy-ass excuses that were all over the place. Nothing really made sense, it sounded crazy in fact, pathetic, so I would feel sorry for him. He even dug up any petty incident he could think of to somehow make it my fault, to make him feel better. I asked over and over again if there was someone else, and all I got was lie after lie. Then silence, two whole months of it. I wrote him some letters, trying to figure things out or whatever—and they were damn good! Then finally I got this piece of crooked-ass chicken scratch in the mail finally admitting all his screwing around in his bachelor pad that mommy helps fund, the new girlfriend who had no idea about me and who I of course didn't know about either. And he had no intention of telling either of us, until she found out through the word on the street. But he still kept being a lying sack-o-shit to me, and continues to omit a lot with her. Like him begging me back insanely after I finally found him out, and still thinking that he could somehow keep us both hanging around separately so he could have his cake and eat it too. Oh the incredible sense of entitlement! I guess long distance has enabled him to pull this shit off. Omissions are lies too, alright?!

I was talking to a man at the bus stop the other day. We were discussing the maniac city buses in DC. Then he goes, "Excuses ain't nothin' but lies. The truth stands still, but a lie goes on and on and on. Some people make a living off of lies." Damn straight—it was like he read my mind. That's the thing, it's the web of lies that makes you crazy, makes it so hard to heal 'cause the damage goes on and on. I feel like I shoulda known, shoulda trusted my intuition. But is it so wrong to love someone? To trust them? To believe them?

For the most part, I grew up in an all-girl very liberal household. My mother was an outspoken lesbian who started the first women's health care clinic in my hometown of Olympia, Washington. She didn't take no shit. I wish more of that woulda rubbed off on me. But in the "real world," a sexist society, what does it mean for a mostly-straight girl to engage intimately with guys? I mean, you like what you like, right? But what if it's not good for you? Is it ever good

enough? Can it really work? I don't know. I think that maybe because of my upbringing, I really don't understand guys. I know there's that Venus and Mars book, maybe I should read it. I even went to see *Jack-ass II* the other night to see if I could gain any insight into the inner-workings of the male mind! Well, I sure hope that's not the answer! But really, why should I have to work so hard to understand the dude psyche, when they don't put any effort in trying to understand me, much less sexism and how it functions in our lives?

So now I realize that this guy (believe me, you don't know him, he's not on anyone's radar) has an insecure need for constant female attention. He goes from girl to girl, vine to vine, without breaking up with the former girl, and all the while lying to both. This didn't happen just to me, it's his MO. It's pathological—he actually thinks he can get away with this! And I guess he has, up 'til now, and it makes me sick to think I was just a part of his scheme. But believe me, he fucked with the wrong girl this time! Duh.

So there's lying liars out there, running for mayor, who come in all sorts of pretty packages. Pull that ribbon at your own risk. But I've always been a sucker for bright-shiny-flashy things and just jumping right in. It's like I still believe in unicorns, leprechauns, and gnomes and shit. Or Prince Charming? Yikes! And I know, I know, we can all just say humans suck, shit happens, life's a beach, visualize whirled peas, and my other car's a broom. OK, fine! Thanks for the revelation! But I swear this time I didn't see this one coming. But then again, there were little things . . . there always are, right?

Listen to me. Do as I say and not as I do. For me it's like what pile-driver Margaret Cho says in her new book *I Have Chosen to Stay and Fight*, "Even though I advocate the freedom of all women to be happy in the bodies that they have, to love themselves because they are entitled to . . . I can't seem to accomplish that contentment myself. I watch their emancipation from inside the prison walls of self-hate. I'm a hypocrite, and I deserve to be punished. The sick thing is, I'm guilty of not being able to stop punishing myself." From childhood neglect, from living in an abusive household, to the loss of self-esteem this sexist society imposes on girls, I learned to normalize disrespectful behavior toward me. I learned to hang in there too long and put up with alotta guys' bullshit. I can write an I'm-gonna-kick-your-ass song about it, but the damage is already done. And I'm supposed to be the "Queen of the riot grrrls!" ha ha . . . I'm begging you (myself?), trust your intuition girl, trust it—no matter how many times he lies to your face and how badly you wanna believe him. In the end, your intuition is the only thing you really got.

I believe in sixth senses and other unsanctioned ways of knowing/experiencing things, though I think I kinda lost it somewhere along the way, especially after my mother died. Some things crush you so completely. But if I've learned one thing about myself, in spite of several terrible things I've had to go through, I am resilient. Not only do I survive, I thrive. So fuck that dude—he can rot in his gnarly bad breath and the miserable emptiness he's created for himself. The ultimate revenge is to live an awesome life. And that's what my next column will be about, just you wait and see!





A hog lies on the ground. A man raises a cinder block into the air and drops it on her head, repeatedly. A hog lies on the ground. A man hits her in the head with a monkey wrench. You

can hear the clanking sound as metal hits bone. Another man stands by and says something like "I think you got her" after the hog stops moving. Suddenly the hog spasms, her last bit of life expressing itself. The man with the wrench laughs and says "you sure about that?" Hogs scramble in narrow metal chutes, barely able to turn around. A man walking in the chute with a bolt gun repeats "I'm gonna get you . . . I'm gonna get you . . ." The man holds the bolt gun to a hog's head and fires; the hog goes down squealing, trampled by the other hogs, which are panicking. The man turns his attention to another hog. He holds the gun to the hogs head and fires. Not a direct hit, the hog is still up and moving and in obvious terror and pain. "I missed you . . . I'm gonna get you . . ." Pigs, thousands of them, are crammed into a windowless warehouse, pushing into each other. Five or six pigs crowd around one to bite and pull at an open head wound, which has overtaken one eyeball and exposed skull and brains. The pig who is being eaten alive is trying to shake off the others but there is nowhere to go. Due to the stress of such intensive confinement these animals sometimes become cannibals. A long line of hogs are suspended upside down from the ceiling by a chain wrapped around a back leg. They are struggling to right themselves or get free. One at a time they are dunked into a vat of boiling water, which removes their coarse, bristles and drowns them. The dead body is removed and falls onto a spinning bed, flipping the hog around, as if rolling. This is so the man who is blowtorching the animal's body can access all sides to remove extra hair. In a windowless, blood-soaked room a cow is constrained inside a machine that looks like a miniature garbage truck. Only the cow's head is sticking out of the machine. The machine turns 180 degrees vertical and the cow's throat is exposed, towards the sky. A man "cleans" the upside down cows throat while a Rabbi watches. The first man slits the cow's throat with a huge knife and a fountain of blood erupts from the cow's neck. Gallons of blood pour out on the man, on the floor. Once it has slowed, the man reaches into the cut and pulls the throat and esophagus out and it dangles, wet, dripping gore. A door opens on the side and the cow is dumped onto the floor where it writhes in it's own and other's blood. This is kosher slaughter. A veal calf is removed from her mother two days after birth and put in a dark pen in a warehouse with hundreds or thousands of others. The pen is so small the calf can't move. Movement toughens the muscles, which lowers the quality, and thus the price, of the veal. The mother of this calf is injected

with a cocktail of drugs and is put on mechanical milking machines. The milk her body is producing was meant for that calf, which instead will be fed an iron deficient diet to keep the muscles soft and preferably white in color. The veal calves are killed, cut apart, and eaten. They are babies. Cows can live for up to 20 years. Dairy cows live for four, as the stress of constantly being pregnant, giving birth, and going back on the milking machines works them so hard. Losing your child over and over perhaps also leads to this truncated lifespan. A cow can't produce milk unless she has given birth. This is the standard process by which the majority of milk, cheese, and all other dairy products are produced. When dairy cows are used up they are dragged, often literally, to slaughter for fast food meat. Slaughter: a cow swinging upside down, moving down the line towards the knife. They are strung up with a chain by one of their back legs, which often break as they struggle. A man moves into the frame and cuts the living cows throat. Blood explodes from the wound, and pours out of the cows mouth and nose and down the drain on the floor. If the cow struggles just so, her body starts to spin and the blood sprays out onto the walls, the man with the knife, anything within range. The killing room is all metal and concrete with pitched floors that lead to drains so all the blood can easily be washed away with a hose. A low, endless seeming warehouse is filled with thousands and thousands of chickens. These chickens are called "broilers" and will be eaten. A tall, skinny man wades through the sea of birds with an easy gait, carrying a pipe or a stick. Seemingly at random he swings the pipe, bringing it down hard on one of the birds. Then another. Then another. They don't die on the first blow, though their bodies and wings seem to be broken as they flap and flop as best they can away from the pipe. This isn't how they are slaughtered however. The slaughter, like the cows and pigs, comes from a knife slash to the throat. "Layer" hens, which are raised for egg production, have their beaks seared off by a hot blade when they are chicks. This is because it is not uncommon for them, due to the stress of having the equivalent of a notebook paper sized amount of space in which to live their short lives, to cannibalize and peck to death other birds. Often these birds then live standing on top of the rotting corpses of their fellow birds. This is how the overwhelming majority of eggs are produced.

Pork. Beef. Chicken. Dairy. Eggs. Standard practice.

The scenes I described I saw last night at a screening of the film *Earthlings*. Many scenes are more brutal than the ones I've recounted, as I've stuck to the portion on food production only. After, I sat in my car in the rain and cried, a combination of sadness and rage—a sadness and rage I think anybody would feel if they saw how animal foods are produced. If you consume animal products, you are complicit in the cruelty and horror involved in their production. And I cannot believe most people, if they had to watch, would want that.





There she is again. Still. In the back of my head, singing, singing always.

I'm sitting in the back corner of a large marble-floored room, facing a husband and wife with their legs

crossed, their eyes closed, above their heads two large black-screened TV's. I am on the woman's side. It's the fourth day of a 10-day silent meditation retreat, and I'm trying to follow the directions of the audio-recorded guru who tells me to move my awareness through different parts of my body, despite the pressure in my brain that makes it almost impossible to even remain conscious. This is something different than the dreamlike otherworldly vision-as-reality state I've been swimming through for days. This is more like I got smashed in the head with a hammer. I'm afraid I will lose it, lose myself, fall out of my chair and wake up not knowing what happened.

The visions are most intense in the morning. This morning I was visited by a drag queen singing me a ballad about what we're going through here. She lounged on a piano bench and gestured toward the rows of meditators as they sat in excruciating stillness on their mats and cushions. "This is not the last day of our enlightenment, it's not the final hour," she sang. "For so long, we suffered in silence for our fathers, but now we're on our own . . . On our own . . ."

The little girl in the back of my mind, she liked the song a lot. She won't stop singing it now. She's writing more words. I can't shut her up. I keep thinking maybe if I can get her to be quiet then the pressure will stop, my brain will resolve within itself and I'll get to feel whole.

I first heard about Vipassana more than 10 years ago. Ten days of silent meditation—no reading, no writing, no music, no eye contact. No arguing about the philosophy or politics of the practice. Ten plus hours a day of meditation, starting at 4:30 a.m. No meals after noon. "I would die," I said. But now? I chose to come here. I know how strong I am, but the fear is still there. Parts of me are screaming "this is a cult! They want to control you! They don't understand you! You're going to leave here more damaged than you already were!" Over and over I remind myself that I get to leave at the end of 10 days.

By the end of the fourth day I have convinced the assistant teachers that I need some protein in the evenings, and they promise to set out some toast, peanut butter, and soymilk for me at tea-time tomorrow. I'm not sure if it was necessary for me to break down into hysterics in order to get my request met, but they listened when I explained that I grew up on starvation diets and I can't do this kind of work if I feel light-headed and out of my body.

Walking the gravel path back to my bed in Dorm D, the pressure in my head has not let up. I tried everything. When the singing wouldn't stop I visualized sending her into the fire, that tough five-year-old with her short haircut and white nightie. Laying in my bed I try to relax against the vice grip in my head and spine. "Don't fight it," I tell myself, not knowing who's talking to whom. The pressure turns into a vibration that grows until it feels like a fire hose got turned on in my brain, it rolls through the gray matter, pulsing in sections. I surprise myself by still being able to have thoughts even as I observe the vibrations of my physical brain. I notice that the singing has stopped for the moment. The pressure is less but not gone.

Day five I watch two mosquito-eaters have sex for like fifteen minutes. Sometimes the one on top traps the other one underneath and they lay there still, and sometimes the underneath one drags the other one around. Later in the day I watch dust motes in the air. I feel like the most special person in the world when I see a plate and cup on the table at tea, with my name and a smiley face on it. Dry, hard crunchy half-burnt toast with a thin layer of peanut butter on one of the two slices, and a cup of sweetened soymilk. I am so lucky.

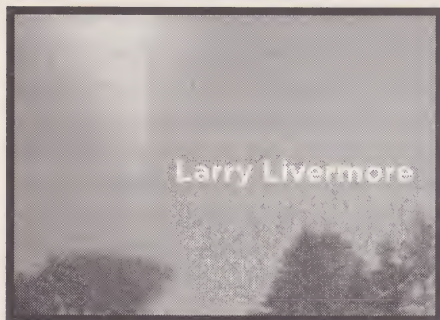
Day eight I'm trying to recreate the vibration in my brain, desperate to alleviate the pressure. "I submit, I submit, I want to learn. What do I have to do?" *Doyouaccept jesuschristas your personallordandsavior* . . . whoa. That was my brain. I guess that came from the Mormons or the Shriners of my childhood. I don't even bow at the end of meditations.

As much as the guru-dude says this is not a dogma, we are definitely being brainwashed. The basic teaching is useful, but by the ninth day we're all sitting here deep in our bodies and this man's voice is giving us a sermon about our "deep, deep misery." At the end of his big speech I watch another woman storm out with her hand over her mouth, and I take a walk to blow off steam about feeling trapped. I pick blackberries and take them to the freaked out lady. I wonder if I could get kicked out for doing that. So far getting in trouble looks like a friendly smiling face whispering instructions. Does it turn into a snarling monster if you cross a line?

On the 10th day we practice a new type of meditation, now that we're all boot-camped into submission, infuse everything with love. The singer in my head is back and louder than ever. She even has backup music now. I let her steer the ship. Love is dangerous. My whole body is buzzing. I feel like another being. I open my eyes and look at the assistant teacher in her meditation, open my energy to her, send her a pulse and watch her nod. Do it again, she nods, then turns to her partner. Whoa, what am I doing. I watch myself.

When silence is broken and we're finally allowed to talk to each other I feel insane love for everyone around me. Even and especially the people who bugged me during our silent co-existence. Anyone who's willing to go through this is pretty fucking badass. I can't stop talking, telling people what I think. I feel so interesting.





Home is where, when  
you go there, they have  
to let you in.

—Robert Frost

I've been laid  
up for a couple  
weeks following  
foot surgery, un-  
able to walk, un-  
able to do much

at all except lie around waiting to get better. The first week wasn't bad, despite the pain being at its worst then. I realized I'd been waiting all my life for the chance to stay in bed all day, sleeping, reading, goofing off on the Internet, without having to feel guilty about being a lazy bum. Then I started going a little stir crazy. My room was more luxurious than a prison cell, but I was just as trapped inside it. And this prison had no guards bringing me food or life's other necessities.

I was pleasantly surprised when friends and neighbors pitched in to cook for me, take me to the doctor, run errands, and in general make my existence as pleasant as any existence involving a carved up foot is likely to be. I was especially surprised because this happened in Berkeley, California. Not that I thought Berkeleyans were less charitable than anyone else, just that I haven't really lived here for the last 10 years. If people were that kind to someone who's practically a stranger, I wondered, what would it be like if I called this place home?

It was my home once, but as with everywhere I've lived, I got restless and hit the road. I've been doing that since I left Detroit at the age of 17, and would have done it sooner if the law or my parents had allowed it. I was in search of greener pastures, of course, but looking back I can see something else at work, an uneasiness of the soul that made me toss everything and everybody aside and move on to parts unknown whenever things started feeling too familiar. If I'd lived in frontier times, I would have been, as Huck Finn put it, always lighting out for the territories.

At the same time, I'm fascinated by people who don't feel the need to tear around the world in search of the next "right place," and similarly by people who do move around, yet seem to feel at home wherever they land. I once asked the Weakerthans' John Samson why he'd never felt impelled to live anywhere besides his hometown of Winnipeg. He spoke glowingly about the value of being anchored, connected to people in a community, but added, "Community is an easy word to say, but an incredibly difficult one to put into practice."

Aaron Cometbus, whose well-documented wanderings have caused some to dub him a modern-day Kerouac (not a comparison he relishes, I should say), is nonetheless preaching a similar gospel. Although he's lived in far more places than I have, the operative word is "lived." Unlike Kerouac, he wasn't passing through in search of a quick thrill; he went to a place to become part of it, to find out what made it tick and leave something of himself when he was gone.

It was Aaron who told me about Santiago, a (relatively) new band from Santa Rosa, California. That I had to hear about them from Aaron, some thousands of miles away, speaks volumes about how I've kept up connections to my own community: Santiago's singer is Gabe Meline, someone I've known for more than half his life.

Santiago recently released an album, *Rosenberg's After Dark*, that delves deeply into the concepts of home and community. On one level it's an extended love song to Santa Rosa, once a sleepy town of 25,000, now a sprawling exurb of 150,000, situated about an hour north of San Francisco. But despite its specific local references—Rosenberg's, for example, was a department store whose closure epitomized the decline of Santa Rosa's once vibrant downtown—it could be the tale of any town. Especially if it's a bit off the beaten track, and teeming with talented young people hard pressed to see any way of following their dreams short of packing up and getting out.

Santiago's message is that it doesn't have to be that way. It's not that Gabe himself hasn't tried it; he once moved briefly to Portland, Oregon, a departure deemed so newsworthy that the *Santa Rosa Press-Democrat's* chief columnist devoted an entire article to "Gabe Meline Leaving Town."

He wouldn't have gone, he says now, had there not been a girl involved, and was relieved when she decided to move back. He's been in Santa Rosa ever since, with no plans to leave again apart from taking Santiago on the road this spring to carry their "No place like home" message to towns and villages across the land.

If I sound facetious, I don't mean to. I've spent time in Santa Rosa myself, and though I've never been its biggest fan, *Rosenberg's After Dark* casts it in an entire new light, makes it sound positively beguiling. In a lonesome, bittersweet way, of course. The opening track features a random soundscape from an empty, long-past-midnight downtown; the echoing beeps of traffic signals and the occasional swoosh of a passing car echo the desolation, desperation, and yes, exhilaration I've felt in so many of my own late-night wanderings.

The songs that follows are rich, textured—far more so than the fluffy pop-punk I usually listen to—and haunting, filled with yearning for a past that casts long shadows and a future that never breaks completely free of those shadows. Despite titles like "We All End Up At Eggen & Lance" (the town mortuary), they also seethe with optimism and hope. Instead of brooding over the fate of living in a less than perfect town, they evoke a desire to rush out and savor the place, to look with new eyes and listen with new ears for what had always seemed to be missing but was merely hiding in plain sight.

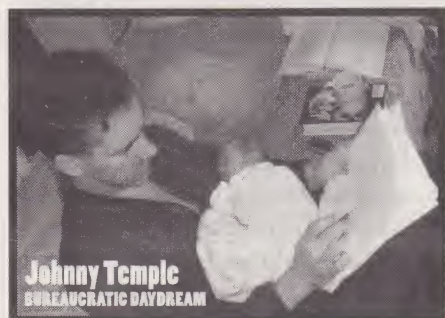
Gabe's always been a gifted musician but now seems to have truly found his voice. That probably has a lot to do with the talents of Josh Drake and Kyle Lindauer, his compatriots in Santiago, but I suspect it's even more because he's finally realized his passion and followed it. Good advice for any aspiring artist or musician, but as John Samson said about community, easier to say than to put into practice.

If you want to hear more about these ideas—or just some great music—I highly recommend the record. It's on a label called Pandacide, and like everything else these days, I'm sure you'll be able



to find it on the interweb. In the meantime, let Gabe himself explain what's so great about Santa Rosa — or wherever else you call home: "It's 90 percent what you make of it . . . and the more time you spend not being a dick, the more you impact your community, the more you adapt to your environment and vice versa, the more you'll be happy with the place that you live."

Anything else? "Yes. The thriving and unsung community of artists, writers and musicians beating ceaselessly and proactively against the current of big box homogenization and transplanted wine dilettantes. And Marvell's Cafe."



#### A CASE FOR NEUROSIS AND BUREAUCRACY

When did neurotic personalities get such a bad rap? When did neurosis become a trait so easily dismissed? Sure, a person who is *too* neurotic may be socially abrasive.

But that's always the case with *too* . . . even *too nice* is a character flaw in these ruinous times.

The plight of neurosis reminds me of comedian Bill Hicks defending narcotics. "If you don't think drugs have done good things for us, do me a favor," Hicks said, "go home and take all your albums, tapes, CDs . . . and burn them. 'Cause you know what? All those musicians who made that great music that has enhanced your lives throughout the years . . . ? *Real fucking high on drugs.*"

Similarly, I would suggest, if you don't think neurosis is beneficial to our society, go burn all your books. Cause most of those phenomenal writers were real fucking neurotic.

Without neurotic people, little would ever get accomplished. I'm not arguing that neurosis is all good or anything. There's definitely a quixotic dynamic at play here: Everyone must figure out how to cope with one's own stress, yet neurotic people can't always keep their mouths shut and often aggravate social situations. (Not all neurotics; many of them, after all, are quite passive.) But in an era when "good ideas" are a dime a dozen, we need people who can actualize. A good idea without a better neurotic is doomed to remain an unrealized abstraction.

In late 2006, neurosis is a personality condition spread across the globe; it can quickly be identified and documented in any major city in either hemisphere. I would call it a *global urban phenomenon*, but that would overlook the legions of neurotics who inhabit suburban and, in some cases, rural environments.

The blatant disrespect in our society toward neurosis is a tendency linked directly to the wholesale miscomprehension of *bureaucracy*. Bureaucracy, too, is summarily dismissed with rolls of the eyes and knowing looks.

So many vital political organizations and movements in recent times have lacked bureaucratic structures to manage them and propel them forward. Not bureaucratic like some sullen, gray-faced man with a tie and an impenetrable frown: more like a social glue ensuring that fundamental organizational bases get covered. Take, for example, the concept of a "social safety net"; isn't this just a fancier way of saying "humane bureaucracy"?

So whoever you are, you besmirchers of neurosis and bureaucracy, mind your step. 'Cause neurosis is spreading like a benevolent wildfire around Asia, Latin America, Africa . . . even places like Macedonia and Iceland. Turn on the TV in any major city and you well inevitably catch a strong whiff of localized neurosis.

Bureaucracies can harness neurosis to dramatic effect. Yet the role of bureaucracies is too often overlooked, and they are not capitalized upon as forces for channeling neurosis in a positive direction. Consequently, neurotic energy, particularly in political and professional endeavors, frequently drops into a dysfunctional free-fall.

The future for neurosis is nonetheless bright, as its proliferation is outpacing even global capitalism. Sadly, the same cannot be said for bureaucracy. Since many people in the world have experienced some form of subjugation under large bureaucracies in their own lands, they develop negative associations. The Soviet Union single-handedly thwarted Americans' concept of bureaucracy for decades.

Now the redefinition must begin. There is no Cold War, there is no Soviet Union, and bureaucracy is no longer being held captive by a right-wing media intent on bringing dysfunction to our political and social struggles. Rather than scorning neurotics and bureaucrats, they should be brought into your homes, invited to speak at your political salons, given awards when appropriate for their dedication and stick-to-itiveness. Sure, there's always room for loose cannons and renegades in any social movement, but without neurotics and bureaucrats supplying organizational glue, persistence, and focus, we are doomed to impotence.

When partnered with humane neurosis, creative bureaucracy can provide regenerative fuel for political movements, social justice organizations, and even small enterprises like skateboard stores and record labels. So quit rolling your eyes and treating neurotics and bureaucrats like social outcasts. Instead, celebrate their gifts, acknowledge them publicly, and, be your mind broad enough, physically embrace them. They have had their backs against the wall for too long.

We need our neurotics and bureaucrats playing offense, not defense.

Believe in possibility. Have faith in your fellow human beings. A warm hug can transform someone from *too* neurotic to unqualified neurotic, which will make them both easier to deal with and more effective comrades in struggles to make this too-unbureaucratic world a better place.



## Sally (Featuring: Lollipop the Rainbow Unicorn)

by Elizabeth Crane

There is not one thing even a little bit sad about this story. This is pretty much the happiest story ever. If you're all up into *War and Peace* or whichever, you won't find it here.

This story is about a woman who was always herself. What better story could there be than that? Plus it's true, or mostly true. It's true enough. It's true seeming.

One presumes that Sally, is her name, started out being a girl who was always herself. You have heard it told that she was herself as a teenager, so it's a logical conclusion, even if it is hard to imagine. Because do you know any teenagers who are themselves? I doubt it. Teenagers are all about being other people. You so wish you'd known her when you were a teenager, but she was born in the 1970s, so she would have been in preschool at the time. Although Sally at four was probably more you than you are after all the therapy. You don't really know much about her life as a preschooler, so you don't know whether her parents did anything really right or really wrong, and my feeling is that it doesn't really matter. My feeling is that Sally became Sally regardless of whether or not her parents did anything right or wrong. Still, maybe if you had babysat for her or something, your life could have gone a different way. You could possibly have learned from her even then with regard to being yourself. I realize you're fine now, but there were some ineffective years. We both know it.

So but look at Sally. She's That Girl looking at herself in the store window and seeing versions of herself all around the city except if That Girl had an eyebrow ring, big boots, and were a happy, funny revolutionary and there were no Donald Hollinger. Nothing that looks like Donald Hollinger, nothing that acts like Donald Hollinger, no ex-Donald Hollinger to be gotten rid of. No Donald Hollinger of any kind. It's not that she doesn't enjoy the company of men, you have heard that she does, it's not even that she wouldn't

like the company of a nice man, you have heard this as well, it's simply that having a man, even a nice one, is not critical to her being completely, joyfully Sally. Do you see what I'm saying. Do you know anyone like this. Probably not. But you should know Sally. You should be Sally. Fine, be yourself. But like Sally.

From what you know, Sally as a teenager had like, beliefs. She had things that she believed in. I know, what's that all about, right? But she did, and Sally made a decision not to ever compromise her beliefs, which is, well, come on, who's ever done that, not me and not you, because it's hard, think about it, think about all the seemingly small compromises you've made in the category of people you've dated alone. It's hard to know which choice was worse, Gene the judgmental environmentalist (judgmenvIRONMENTALIST?) or Philip who thought it was his right to park illegally without paying tickets because *his taxes more than covered it*, which on his salary from Quizno's you can be sure they did not. And how about that time you didn't tell them they forgot to scan your Lucky Charms at the grocery store. Or that time you ate a Quarter Pounder (with cheese!) after you swore you'd never eat at McDonald's again after reading *Fast Food Nation*. Or spending actual cash money on a copy of *Star* magazine on impulse at the supermarket checkout because on the cover it alleged a prurient relationship between Jake and Maggie Gyllenhaal even though inside the title read "Jake and Maggie: Siblings!" which is what they always do and you should have known it, and you felt positively greasy afterward even though it was only 99 cents, you have to live with knowing that 99 cents of your money went to perpetuating more of this. (Not to mention more fanciful scenarios like let's say if some huge low-priced chain store that was known to use child labor in sweatshops in third world countries offered you three million dollars to be in their new ad campaign, at the very least you wouldn't just say no flat out and prob-

ably you even would think *Hell yes what values* first before you thought the whole thing through to the point where you were conflicted and were leaning toward a complex supposedly moral justification for going through with it.) What about being best friends with Jessica Sandler in third grade because her dad took you to FAO Schwartz and bought you a Little Kiddle even though Jessica Sandler was kind of spoiled and bratty and even though she was mostly nice to you she was often mean to other people. Who wouldn't be friends with Jessica Sandler for a Little Kiddle? Sally. Is who. No way would Sally sell out for a Little Kiddle. Sally was disappointed in the world, a bit, but not in a dark despairing, Oh, I'll just go mope around to a Morrissey record teenager kind of way, in a You know, I might be able to do a little something about this kind of way.

Which is what she did. And you can imagine why, because who wouldn't listen to such an engaging, funny chick? We already know how easily influenced you are, what with your Jessica Little Kiddle history so imagine what might happen if you met up with Sally, and she charmed you like she charmed me, and she said There's this thing wrong with the world and this is what I tried to do about it, and whatever her story happens to be that day, because she has a lot of them, it will in some way be funny, and this story will make you feel like changing the world actually is possible, in bits and pieces anyway. What you especially admire about her is the way she's not all, righteous or whichever, she's not even, You kinda need to go do some stuff too. But it will happen because she's that compelling. You will want to do what you can do. Try not to be disappointed if it doesn't seem as cool as what Sally's doing. Not possible. Making art is not unimportant. Tell yourself that. No seriously, try.

Sally got her hand in like 16 pies from the get go. Seventeen if you count actual pies, which is something Sally en-



joys and partakes in frequently. Zines and what have you. *Princess Vanessa Lipstick McGillicuddy Tells The Truth*, her first zine, is legendary in certain circles. In zine-reading circles. You didn't even know what a zine was before Sally. Sally is the kind of person who let's just say for example if there's an awful war going on, or if large numbers of people and even corporations are opposed to similarly gendered people getting married, or if people are opposed to other people having opinions that are different than those people's opinions, or if people are listening in on your phone calls and reading your emails and calling it security or I don't know what else, unlike me and you, she won't be like, What am I gonna do go march or something? Because crowds freak me out and plus what's the point. Sally might march or she might not, but what she will do is hang around the White House holding a bunch of balloons, smiling, and get reporters to ask her why she was hanging around the White House holding a bunch of balloons, and then cheerfully tell them it seemed like a pleasant way to say she was against the war and would they like a balloon? Or maybe she'd do something like go into elementary schools calling herself "Storyteller Princess Vanessa Lipstick McGillicuddy" and then read fairytales and other books that she'd rewritten to get little girls to rethink the whole happy ending having to have a dude in it or that a Barbie-shaped body would be a sort of effective emotional problem solver of any kind and that maybe a happy ending was one where you stood outside the White House with a bunch of balloons. And more pies like this. Pies that never even occurred to you.

A little-known fact about Sally is that she has several situation-specific superpowers. Let's go back to the White House for example. Sally might discover, upon leaning against the front gates, that she suddenly had a rubbery quality that would allow her to slip right through. Think of

the possibilities! I mean, rubbery is not the same as invisible, but if she could get through, think of what she could do on the inside of the White House with all those balloons! They wouldn't know what to do. They would be all This lady with a pierced eyebrow came into the White House and gave out balloons! And someone with a lick of sense, like maybe a guard or a secretary who has no interest in party lines or anything, just wants to make her Kia payments, says, So? And everyone else would go, So? So? So? And the lick of sense lady would say Yes, so, as in "so what" and the White House people would be like You can't just give out balloons around here but no one can say why, exactly, or find a law that says you can't, which is what they run around trying to do while Sally waits patiently in the office of the press secretary, who listens to her opinion about the war and being against it, and exactly why, and this gets relayed to the media via the press secretary because that's their job, to explain things like how people with balloons get into the White House but to try to tell it in a way that it seems threatening but that they have it under control and even though they believe in freedom of speech they don't believe in, well, balloons, maybe. You don't know.

On the rubbery front, she discovered while rehearsing for a school reading that she could grow herself a Barbie body. Freakish to be sure, but what a perfect illustration of how wrong that is, to see a Barbie body on a real person! But besides not wanting to freak the kids out, Sally feels like even she isn't immune to abusing her superpowers. Like if there were some \$2000 pair of the cutest chunky boots ever and she had the ability to psychically make salespeople offer her a 90 percent discount, she knows she might do it. Plus even Sally doesn't really know what all her superpowers are. Sometimes they just show up. The thing that's important about this fact is that she doesn't use them. She doesn't think it's fair. I'd use

them if I were really in trouble, she says. But I haven't had to yet.

Fine. Maybe this is less true than I led you to believe at the outset. Maybe she doesn't have superpowers. Maybe she kicked a boy in the knee once in grade school. Maybe he deserved it. Maybe she's lonely, maybe her mom makes her completely nuts sometimes. Maybe her dad reads the paper during dinner. Maybe she doubts herself, on occasion. Doesn't matter. All the better if one or more are true, then there's more hope for you. You don't think so. But you don't need to know.

Anyway then you find her. No, she finds you. She thinks there's something about you. How is *that* possible. Because of the art, she tells you, even though you hadn't said that out loud. To which you say, But that's what I *like* to do. To which she says, No kidding. To which you say, Well then, and Hm.

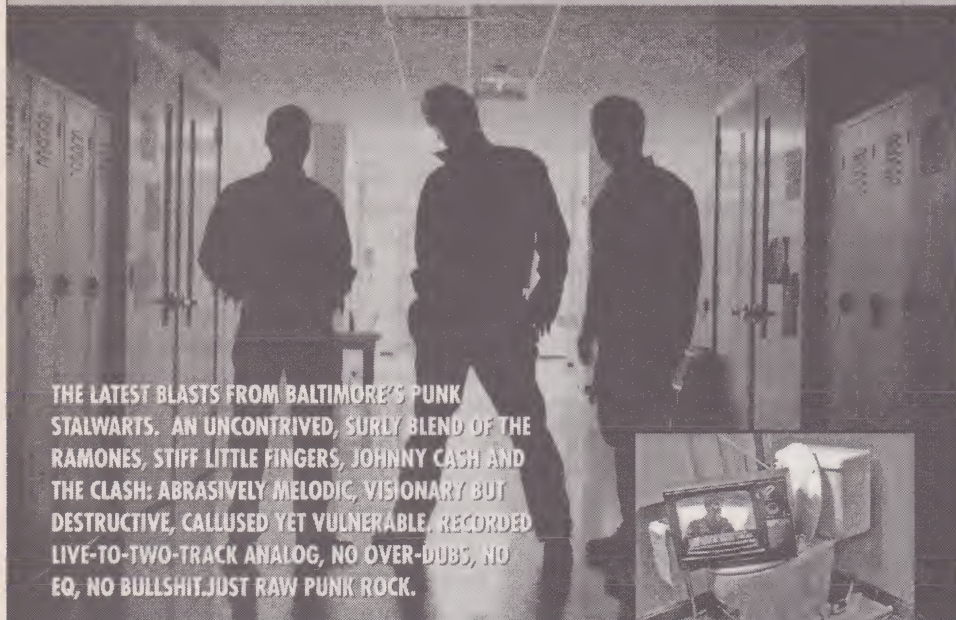
One day she tells you a story about how she goes to the park with her new kite, and her new kite has a rainbow unicorn on it she named Lollipop, except it's not very windy so Lollipop isn't getting a lot of air, except Sally doesn't really mind, because she is cracking herself up that she has a kite with a rainbow unicorn named Lollipop. It's like the most perfect image of actual joy you've ever heard of, forget babies in pumpkins or whichever, this is a grown woman frolicking and cracking herself up with a kite and a unicorn. It should be on the cover of a magazine, except it isn't, because the magazines are clogged up with Jennifer Anistons always, as though there's no one else, and maybe Jennifer Aniston isn't a role model for every girl or woman, do you see, maybe the world would like other options. And you can relate, because sometimes you crack yourself up, which is probably why you like her. ©

Elizabeth Crane is the recipient of the 2003 Chicago Public Library 21st Century Award and the author of *When the Messenger is Hot* and *All This Heavenly Glory*, as well as the upcoming short story collection *You Must Be This Happy to Enter* from Punk Planet Books.



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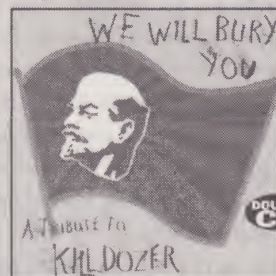
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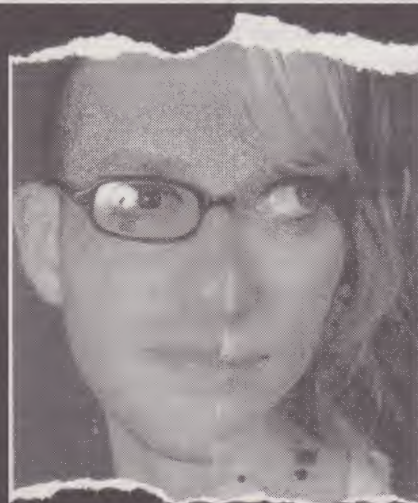
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# Makin' Yer Own Menstrual Pads

By Anne Elizabeth Moore

**S**topping the rampant flow of blood from yer 'gina is always fun, but here's a way you can do it without the weird-smelling paper products, embarrassing run-ins down at the drug store, or endless costs of OTC tampons. Plus: your new menstrual pads will be as pretty as you can make 'em and totally, 100 percent reusable.

First, grab yourself some thick flannel, preferably from an old shirt or some well-used sheets. This will quickly stain—a brownish red, FYI (see Fig G)—so make sure you choose a color to either highlight or downplay the eventual addition of your menstrual blood. If you're looking to downplay it, think this over for a minute: those who are uncomfortable with menstrual blood in any way may not be so cool about makin' and usin' they own pads. Seriously, this is not for the faint of heart.

If you can bear to go on, cut one piece of flannel into an oblong shape of about seven inches long and three inches wide, with "wings" on either side that should cross over when folded. (See Fig A.)

Cut two additional pieces from the same flannel—basically this shape, halved. (Fig B and C) These will form the back of the pad, and should intersect slightly. Sew all three pieces together, as shown in the back view, Fig D. For a bit of color, use a brightly colored thread which will contrast with your flannel and hopefully provide some amusement during those dark days of heavy, achy flow. Add either snaps or Velcro to the wings so they will close around your underpants (make sure to try it a few times to avoid the whole topside/downside confusion).

Now cut two oblong shapes—of about six and a half inches long, two and a half inches wide—and sew them together as seen in Fig E. These will fit inside the pocket of your new creation and provide extra padding (in the commercials they call it "protection"), so make at least two.

Your new reusable menstrual pad is now prêt a porter (see Fig F). I'd advise making at least two for each of your regular days of flow, and a couple extra for your friends. Although I don't use them when I travel—this would require a little more organization than I'm capable of—it is possible to use nothing but your hand-made rewashable pads for the rest of your childbearing years. Inga Muscio even suggested in *Cunt* that you rinse the blood right into your houseplants and, while nourishing life in this way always appealed to me, my houseplants died before I got the chance to try it. But let me know how it goes! ©



FIG. A  
(ONE PIECE)



FIG. B  
(ONE PIECE)

FIG. C  
(ONE PIECE)



FIG. D  
(BACK VIEW)



FIG. E  
(CUT TWO AND SEW TOGETHER TO FIT INSIDE)



FIG. F  
(COMPLETED)



FIG. G  
(COMPLETED AND USED)



# DIY food

EVERYTHING THAT EATS, LIVES

by stacey gengo

## Mustard Mustard

**A**s a condiment, mustard is vastly underrated in the commercial market. A neon yellow sauce in a similarly colored plastic bottle is the American icon—ubiquitous at ballparks and summer barbeques. The irony lies in the name, “French’s.” Behind this unnatural yellow sauce is a versatile plant species. It is essentially a plant with small yellow flowers, green leaves, and long, thin seedpods containing pungent seeds. The condiment is from the seeds—first ground into pastes and powders.

Like most other plants, mustard has culinary and medicinal properties. The basis of mustard’s healing properties stem from its heat essence. Once harnessed, it can cure many ailments since excess heat is often thought to be the source of illness and heat applied to heat creates a cooling factor. Mustard is said to cure the common cold. The plaster of mustard, made from a seed paste, when applied to an inflamed area, aids in healing.

The culinary uses of mustard are wide and varied. The greens are peppery in taste and part of the same family as broccoli, Brussels sprouts, and kale. They are a staple of American soul cooking. As for the seeds, there are three types: yellow, brown, and black. Yellow mustard seeds, sometimes called white seeds, are less pungent in taste and larger than in size than the other seeds. Their mild manner makes them appealing to American mustard manufacturers. Brown seeds are a bit sharper in taste and commonly used for pickling. They are a staple in commercial European mustards, mainly because of their ease in mechanical harvesting. Basic English mustard blends these seeds with the yellow. Black mustard seeds are only harvested by hand since they are the smallest of the three. They are found most often in Indian cooking.

Powdered mustard is the product of finely ground seeds. Mustard seeds can be stored for up to a year in a dry, dark place, while powdered mustard is best used after six months. Prepared mustard is made from powdered mustard combined with seasonings and a liquid, usually vinegar, water, beer or wine. American mustard is made from the yellow seed and combined with vinegar, sugar, and turmeric (the color source). European and Chinese mustards use the brown seeds, like Dijon mustard, named for its point of origin. The widely known maker of Dijon, House of Poupon, is known in the US as Grey Poupon. German mustards vary in taste from sweet to very hot. Chinese mustards are hot and pungent. Unopened prepared mustard can be store in dark dry conditions for two years. Once opened, this mustard must be refrigerated.

Mustard making goes as far back as the early Romans, who are the reason mustard seeds appeared in Gaul and Britain. Monasteries became the first commercial artisans of mustard. By the

fourteenth century, apothecaries were in on its creation. Mustard appeared stateside courtesy of Father Junipero Serra, who carried the seeds with him to California.

The preparation of mustard is varied. It can be as coarse or finely ground as desired. The liquid addition is equally as diverse. Using only mustard powder and water will produce a very hot sauce. The English powdered brand, Coleman’s, is an example of a popular mustard powder. On the opposite end, whole grain mustard is created using coarsely ground mustard seeds and water.

The flavoring in brown and black mustard seed comes from the essential oil content, while yellow seeds contain a sulphur compound. When mixing seeds and liquid, the temperature of the liquid is important. Cold liquids intensify the flavor and spice. Applying heat or hot water reduces the intensity but sacrifices some zest. When adding mustard to the cooking process it is best to add it last in order to preserve the flavor.

Mustard seeds are usually found at Indian markets or, possibly, in the spice section of local health-food stores. Grinding the seeds using a mortar and pestle produces a nice coarse grind, while an electric coffee grinder is ideal for fine powders. Use a separate grinder since the oils will be difficult to remove and may give your coffee an unusual taste.

When making mustard at home, flavors should be allowed to develop for 24 hours. Vary the texture and flavor to your desired taste. Experiment using different liquids: white or red wine vinegar, wine, beer, grape juice, and cider, for example. Here’s good basic mustard (adapted from Lynn Alley).

Grind 4 tablespoons of brown and yellow mustard seeds to your desired texture.

Add the ground seeds to ¼ cup mustard powder. Mix thoroughly.

Add about a ¼ cup of cold water to the mixture. Blend. Let stand 10 minutes.

Add a couple tablespoons of vinegar, or beer, or wine—your preference and a teaspoon of salt to the mixture. Refrigerate.

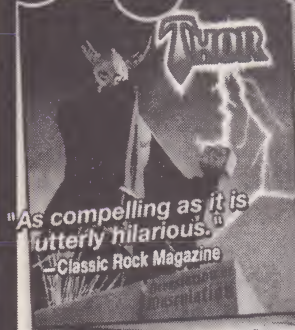
Let stand 24 hours before using.

If you’d rather purchase your mustard, check out the Mount Horeb Mustard Museum in Mount Horeb, Wisconsin. They have over 4300 jars of prepared mustard in the collection, as well as an online mustard store. Visit them at: [www.mustardweb.com](http://www.mustardweb.com) ©

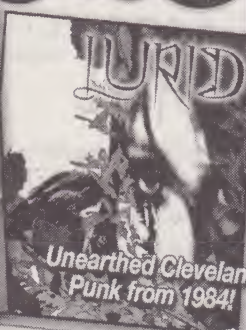


# WHY I HATE WOMEN

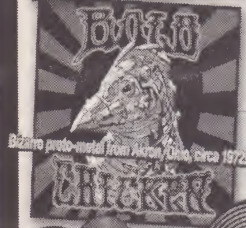
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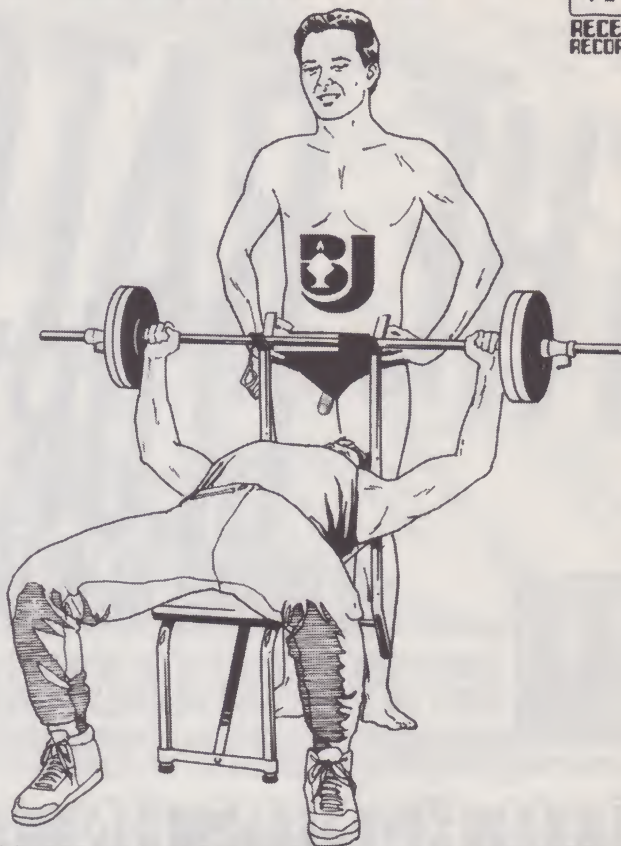

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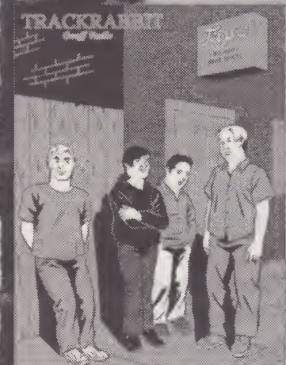
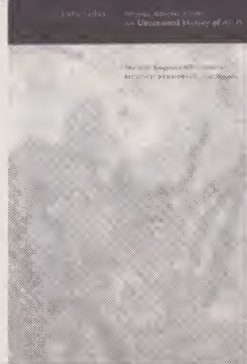
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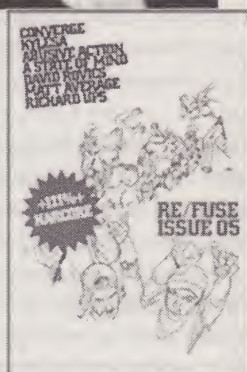
THE BLOW



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# REVIEWS

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# MUSIC



## The Blow—Paper Television, CD

Fellow fan Austin English and I have been arguing about the recent Blow album *Paper Television*—sort of. We agree on the details: it's angrier, tighter, and more reactionary than her previous work, and contains some of the danciest and poppiest songs. They're catchier than I'd ever have imagined from her had I not actually heard them in concert before—radio-ready, practically begging for a teen following,

but smart and fun and actually deserving of one.

We disagree, however, on whether this is a positive development in the oeuvre of the thoughtful and contemplative Khaela Marich and bandmate Jona Bechtolt.

It is, I say: anger's a lost form in the world of pop music and, frankly, the world can use more models for how to deal with rage over fucked-up relationships, gender politics, and our generally screwy world. "I guess I'm on the long list of girls who love the shit out of you / We know what not to expect it's about what we'll get out of you," the chorus of "The Long List of Girls" goes.

But Austin makes an excellent point too: the Blow's previous work has all been about how hard love is, and how important. No sunshine, lollipops, and rainbows from Marich, though: just thriving vitality in subject matter and form. Previous albums, Austin tells me, were "more like 'it is incredibly hard to have real love for people and it takes a lot of work but you have to do the work.' At least that's what I got from her. And I just don't see that it *Paper Television*. . . on her other albums I think she's making really great points about boy/girl dynamics, but . . . this album seems more angry than smart. It's a polemic against boys (in a lot of places)." And he's right. "If something in the deli aisle / Makes you cry / So of course I put my arm around you and I walk you outside / Through the sliding doors / Why would I mind?" is one holdover from these maybe bygone days, from "Parentheses." But there is overall more anger on *Paper Television*. Even though he's a boy, Austin has a good point.

Marich has also moved, however, from the universal to the local, and songs that used to be about the general ways of the world or characters almost anyone you know could embody now seem to be about Marich's personal, and not always great, relationships with boys. "It gets hard," she even admits on "Fists Up." And later: "It was perfect, you know, with just one little problem / The fact that it turns out you don't really want it." It's true, the songwriter seems a bit defeated. Deflated. Vincible. Which means also that her writing is sharper and more incisive. And ultimately, maybe a bit more honest.

The album's inconsistent—Austin and I agree that the French song in the middle is aggravating, although for different reasons. And it's true, the Blow seems to have lost something on this album. A bit of a drive for that world domination, some of the ridiculous egotism that, far from being annoying, actually secured a place for Marich at the center of the world. Yet in putting her ambition aside, she's cleared some space in her heart to dance. And I don't care what Austin says, I'll take the anger if it's got a good beat. —Anne Elizabeth Moore

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## Deicide—The Stench of Redemption, CD

This is going to be a difficult review to write. Deicide were, via their second album *Legion*—along with Morbid Angel—my first exposure to death metal way back in eighth grade. Flash forward 14 years and five studio albums and we arrive at 2006's *The Stench of Redemption*.

The album's title seems to have a double meaning. After the messy departure of two original members, Brian and Eric Hoffman

(who also served as the band's guitarists), many questions remained: who would replace them? Is the band breaking up? How can Deicide go on after 16-plus years of a single, original lineup? And the most important question: what the fuck? Well, the band *did* play on, replacing the brothers Hoffman almost immediately with Ralph Santolla (ex-Death, Iced Earth) and ex-Cannibal Corpse member Jack Owen. Deicide has persevered and are in the process of redeeming their name as death metal's badwill ambassadors. Although of course "redemption" can also be viewed as salvation from personal sin via Jesus's sacrifice, which is right up Deicide's satanic alley.

A small part of me dislikes Deicide, honestly. After admitting that they released two shitty albums (2000's *Insineratehymn* and 2001's *In Torment in Hell*) just as a means of getting out of their supposedly bad contract with Roadrunner really hurt longtime fans. Granted, I didn't buy either of those albums—my bullshit detector was on high alert after skipping *Insineratehymn* due to lack of funds and then hearing a promo of *In Torment*—but hearing them admit this made me wary of future endeavors. 2003's *Scars of the Crucifix* was pretty good, though, so I welcomed them back with one of those awkward hugs you give a relative you barely know or that you get from a woman that doesn't want to squash her boobs against you.

*The Stench of Redemption* was my first time since *Legion* that I really approached the band as a fan. I had no promo (in fact, I won the copy I own in a Deicide contest I entered on a whim while editing the last issue of *Punk Planet*), and the first time I heard anything off the album was when my girlfriend and I were Tivo-skimming *Headbanger's Ball* and saw the video for "Homage for Satan." The first thing I thought was, "The vocals are way too high in the mix."

This thought crossed my head again when I got the CD in the mail and popped it into the car stereo, but has since subsided slightly upon repeated listens. The mix overall, actually, is a little weird. Steve Asheim's drums are somewhat lost, especially the bass drums, but sound awesome when blasting along with the guitars (particularly in "Not of This Earth"). And guitars are the most important element of the new record.

Owen and Santolla bring a different approach to this album. The riffs are more focused, but at the same time more loose and natural feeling. Gone is the feeling of autopilot. The solos are also different. Rather than just a jumble of notes and some cool dive-bombs here and there (although bassist and vocalist Glen Benton claims that Santolla has been writing



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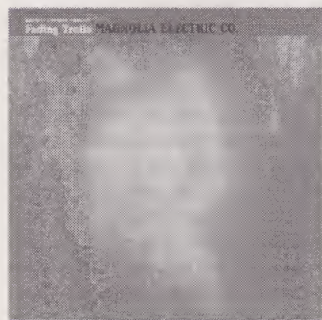
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solos for the band for years), the solos are melodic, flowing, and fit seamlessly in-between riffs, rather than abruptly ending before the next part begins. The songs also run a little longer, a good amount of them topping the four-minute mark, which makes the album over 40 minutes long... a little too long to have a forceful impact. In fact, "The Lord's Sedition" has a long-ass intro unlike anything heard from Deicide before which causes the song to hit 5:47! Once again: what the fuck?

Closing the album is another Deicide first: a cover. Of who, you ask? Deep Purple! Huh? Pretty humanizing, actually, that Deicide can admit to non-Satan-based influence. It's almost like they're saying, "C'mon, fans. You know as well as we do that we're just four guys in a band. Please don't take this too seriously."

Finally, the lyrics are typical Benton: Thesaurus-based Satanic posturing with no real message, clarity, or staunch position, other than that Satan is great for some reason. But, these lyrics have to be taken for what they are: part of a death metal band. The genre wouldn't exist if it weren't for these types of lyrics, so once again, Deicide gets a pass.

My relationship with Deicide is back on solid ground thanks to *The Stench of Redemption*, but I'm curious as to what the future brings with this new lineup. —**Dave Hofer**  
[Earache.earache.com](http://Earache.earache.com)



#### Magnolia Electric Co. – Fading Trails, CD

"Darling, you faded on me." So begins another album in the storied timeline of Jason Molina, this time under the guise of Magnolia Electric Co. Prior to this name he had stayed behind the moniker Songs: Ohia, releasing close to a dozen lovely, bleak albums, culminating with a record using the current namesake as its title. At first, it seemed Magnolia Electric Co intended to branch off and explore the

possibilities of a more countrified rock band behind the music, as opposed to solely Molina and a handful of contributors, but the few releases put out under this name make it a difficult project to pin down.

The first release, put forth in 2005, was a large, ramshackle live album (*Trials and Errors*); the second a subdued studio effort (*What Comes After the Blues*), and after a quick EP, we have *Fading Trails*. A great deal of separate situations went into the making of this record, as the nine tracks here were culled from four different studio sessions, each with a separate name, producer, and a host of different band members. It is an intriguing approach, to be sure, but ultimately makes the record as rewarding as it is frustrating.

Each session was given a name—Nashville Moon, Black Ram, Sun Studios, and Shohola—and it would seem as though Molina just closed his eyes and picked the handful of songs he could tolerate most from each batch. The variety of sounds and sonics used in each session causes *Fading* to come across as a rarities compilation, incapable of focusing in one direction. All of the usual suspects appear here: devils and pale moonlight; crows and north stars' fol-

lowing dark roads; ghosts and the moon and leaving and forgetting; all of the women and the landscapes and remembering them all too well. Here, Molina continues to explore his preoccupation with the blues, but also starts to leave the songs behind before making his point. "Montgomery Bound," for one, is a huge rocker, but cuts out abruptly before the two-minute mark. The atmosphere is not as leavened, less planned; Molina tackles a good number of these tracks unaccompanied. Perhaps counter-intuitively it finally sounds like he knows what he wants.

It is curious to see the direction this reincarnation has taken since *What Comes After the Blues* was released, only a year ago. For the most part, the shifty bombast of a band effort is gone, and there are no smoothed-over studio tracks here. No heartstring-pullers like "Hard to Love a Man" either, though "Steady Now" comes close, as Molina uses his gorgeous warble of a howl to bring the album to an end. Mostly it just sounds like an intentionally under-produced album, and it is nearly impossible to differentiate the studio tracks from the demos. "A Little at a Time" in particular starts off with muffled street noise, even though it was recorded in a studio setting. The comparative minimalism of these songs should be of no complaint for any fan of Songs: Ohia, but it does come in stark contrast to other Magnolia Electric Co releases. Even the longer, extended tracks from *Trials and Errors* are gone here, and many songs barely reach past the three-minute mark. Midwest blues in a nutshell—is that even possible? These aren't compositions in the traditional sense, and without many aspects of the previous flourishes and final touches, it just doesn't sound like a band, which is perhaps part of the point. Scattered as it is, it becomes more of a continuation of the ideas begun in Songs: Ohia but roughly translated into the new effort.

*Fading Trails* is an album that switches the initial reasoning behind the moniker, building it down instead of up, and allowing Molina to reclaim his place as songwriter as opposed to band leader. As he falls back into something more familiar, the music becomes less epic, although there's certainly more a mystery to it. Unfortunately, as "Montgomery Bound" proves, the mystery too often quits right as it starts to show promise, building to a climax that doesn't necessarily exist.

This is slow-burning Americana with a Midwest bend, boiled down until reduced and concentrated. A little bit weary, a little bit haunted, the album is both pained and personal as Molina continues to build upon his own elusive narrative. A dark road and an open night, driving across deserted black plains into nowhere—consider this another chapter to tack onto his already murky mythology. —**Scott Morrow**

[Secretly Canadian, 1499 W. 2nd St, Bloomington, IN 47403, secretlycanadian.com](http://Secretly Canadian, 1499 W. 2nd St, Bloomington, IN 47403, secretlycanadian.com)



#### Swallows – Me With Trees Towering, CD

If you believe the weird, weird world of modern music, then the Swallows don't really exist. There are several reasons why. 1) They're on the small and independent Cherchez La Femme Projects, a post-Mr Lady label that's basically operated out of Sarah Dougher's kitchen. (She sells organic doggie treats from there, too.) 2) They're from Portland, which is not east of the Mississippi and thus way, way the heck off the



## REVIEWER SPOTLIGHTS



### Reviewer Spotlight: Eric Action (EA)

**Childish, Billy, Play: *Capt'n Calypso's Hoodoo Party*.** Featuring 11 tracks of the mighty Childish (along with some friends) doing calypso versions of your favorites, *Capt'n Calypso's Hoodoo Party* is my party album when I need a pick-me-up. Whether you want punk accordion, "Anarchy in the UK," or an overblown version of "Three Blind Mice," you cannot go wrong with this disc. Be warned—this isn't a novelty record. Billy and the boys (and gals) are having serious fun. Properly sounding like it was recorded in a sweaty, dirty nightclub, *Calypso's Hoodoo Party* always pleases a crowd at any party. My eight-year-old son loves singing along to this one in the car at loud volumes, and many of the songs get stuck in your head, for sure. Sometimes I feel Childish can do little wrong; in fact, if I was stuck on a desert island, I would take the 70 or so Childish LPs in my collection over any other artist. Especially when you count all of his bands, he has done nearly every genre. Sure, he recycles songs, band after band, album after single, and will release an album by swapping the gals for the fellas on vocals. The thing about Childish is that it doesn't matter. You appreciate the songs you know and the new treatment they're given, all while enjoying a new song or two along the way. Disregarding his poetry or paintings, it is still impossible to find a more productive artist of his quality. Not an easy find for even the fans of the master, *Play: Capt'n Calypso's Hoodoo Party* is worth tracking down.

**Currently spinning retro late eighties:** ALL, Lemonheads, Lyres, Hüsker Dü, and '80s Fall... nice mix, huh?



### Reviewer Spotlight: Dan Agacki (DA)

**Lemonheads, *It's a Shame About Ray*.** The timing of this spotlight is perfect. As I write this, tomorrow marks the release of the first Lemonheads record in 10 years! To say that I'm overjoyed would be an understatement. That fact combined with the recent surge in '90s alterna-rock nostalgia made this pick a no-brainer. I'm not sure why I even bought this album in the first place. I probably saw the video for "Mrs. Robinson" on *Alternative Nation* or something. When eighth grade rolled around and I had to ride the bus to school every day, *It's a Shame About Ray* was my Walkman tape nine out of 10 days. I still listen to that same tape copy quite frequently. The fact that a tape has lasted 13 years and thousands of plays is a pretty amazing feat. When Kurt Cobain burnt out on being the poster boy for "alternative rock," Evan Dando was the perfect guy to take over the throne. His rarely matched vocals and pop-rock sensibilities laid all others in the dust. *It's a Shame About Ray* was the peak of the Lemonheads' existence. Sure, those early Dando/Daily albums were great, but they never reached consistency in the early days. Here's hoping that the new one is at least half as good as this album.

**You better shut up and listen:** Pink Reason, *S/T*;; Truthdealer, *The Lieswater Album*; Brief Weeds, *A Very Generous Portrait*; Pink Floyd, *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn*; Honor Role, 1982.



### Reviewer Spotlight: Abbie Amadio (AJA)

**Neutral Milk Hotel, *In the Aeroplane Over the Sea*.** In the *Aeroplane Over the Sea* has received plenty of critical praise and fan worship since its release on Merge Records in 1998. And, rightly so. When I first heard it, there was no question as to the weight of its songs, the significance of its cover art, and the sincere creativity of Jeff Mangum's lyrics. The record is genuinely human, even though its lyrics can conjure images we'd prefer are alien to us. Mangum's lyrics are poetry set to music. His imagery is sweet, sometimes twisted, and feels like a dream that could be mistaken for memory. There is an emotional power behind his words that is strengthened by the melancholic groan of his vocals, which retreat and soar with each proper note. His delivery feels the lyrics; music and words are codependent and unified in telling the same story. Without any sense of melodrama, *In the Aeroplane Over the Sea* is moving. It is a story, a mixture of dreams, memories, and disjointed experiences made even more powerful in the album's precise instrumentation and perfectly strung-together melodies. The record is a representation of a twisted past, not of history, but of people trying to put together bits and pieces of settings and acquaintances, which are recognizable but still strange.

**Letter Of The Day "B":** Beekeeper, *Ostrich*; Black Lips, *Let it Bloom*; Built to Spill, *Keep it Like a Secret*; Bellini, *Small Stones*; David Bowie, *Best of Bowie*.



### Reviewer Spotlight: Bill Angelbeck (BA)

**Manu Chao, *Clandestino*.** I guess I'm a latecomer to Manu Chao. I was at this party of mostly Argentinians... anyway, the wine was flowing and this incredibly fluid Spanish music was playing that had a minimalist avant-garde element along with Mexican mariachi guitar. I had to ask "Who is this?" Nearly everyone around me stopped and said "Manu Chao!" as if they were dumbfounded. I was certainly the one who was not-in-the-know that night. But, he's not well-known among Americans while there's much awareness abroad. Manu Chao is the ringleader of the Latin Alternative movement; in fact, he was doing it long before it attracted such a name. He has quite a distinctive style—mixing up rock, French cabaret, salsa, hip-hop, reggae, and even Algerian folk music into a style that is distinctly his own. In his youth in Basque, Spain, and the suburbs of Paris, he was highly influenced by the Clash and other early punk groups. He formed Mano Negra, named after a Spanish anarchist organization, and his lyrics and sound samples often indicate his leftist politics. *Clandestino* was his first solo album and the minimalist sound is strong as opposed to the fuller sound of his later

### Across Five Aprils – Collapse, CD

Remembering the Caldwell album I reviewed a few issues back from Indianola Records sends a shiver running up and down my spine. Thankfully, in reviewing this album, my fears of another bland-a-thon were completely unfounded. Like their labelmates, Across Five Aprils may follow a familiar blueprint, but *Collapse*—the Chattanooga band's sophomore full length—is packed so full of great tunes that it's hard to find fault with it. Take for example "I Will Stop the Rain," which combines some memorable guitar hooks with a massive chorus that creeps up on you in the best way. In terms of songwriting, Across Five Aprils is miles ahead of the competition; the band create hook after hook with huge sing-a-long choruses, tempered by rough and ready guitars and vocals that go from sung to screaming without a hint of the usual contrivance that plagues their contemporaries. If you're looking for a new fix of melodic metalcore, *Collapse* is Shinola in a sea of shit. (CL)

Indianola, [IndianolaRecords.com](http://IndianolaRecords.com)

### Albert React – Sonos Eterno, CD

There is plenty to dislike about the amateurish "reaching" of an unremarkable outfit playing emotional octaves at a snail's pace, all the while accompanying a voice crafted for 15 seconds of radio fame. However, Albert React—in shedding their murky past as an unremarkable outfit playing a more "heavy," "aggressive" brand of rock—find biting the likes of Sunny Day Real Estate a more successful pursuit. They hit all the right notes, go through the proper motions, and this disc is—if nothing else—listenable for anyone who's been through the wringer of mid-'90s college rock. The problem here is that college rock has moved on, and the only place for an album like this is the bargain bin. There is a pull that might interest some readers, though, and that is this: the disc is engineered and produced by Kevin Ratterman, drummer of the band Elliott, who manages to do the unthinkable and polish a turd. (JJC)

CL, 1224 Millersville Pike, Lancaster, PA 17603, [crecords.com](http://crecords.com)

### Anyway – Dead End, CD

Finally, a title that doesn't fit for all the right reasons. The second full length from this Czech quartet will open far more doors for the group than it will close. From blasts of high-octane punk to more angular, Fugazi- or Hüsker-infused refrains, this excellent 12-song outing displays a frighteningly developed grasp on how to craft calculated explosions. The record's best played with speakers trembling, especially for floor-shaking tracks like "Lost," "Sick," or "I Feel Bad." Anyway also harbors a great sense of pacing and keeps the disc from becoming redundant by knowing just when to cool things down (the moody lull of "Bar Song" or "Dirty Shoes") or toss in a blood-curling barnburner. Much of the disc's second half, beginning with the blistering one-two punch of "The Future" and "Cunny," feels like a call to riot, all furious guitars and barked vocals. Consider it an invitation. (JV)

Silver Rocket Records, c/o Martin Hula, PO Box 378, 111 21 Praha 1, [silver-rocket.org](http://silver-rocket.org)

More Nolse Less Music, Dietmar Stork, Oranienstr. 174, 10999 Berlin, Germany, [morenolselessmusic.de](http://morenolselessmusic.de)

### Ascent of Everest, the – How Lonely Sits the City, CD

The Ascent of Everest aim to create swoons of

sound and affect moody ambience. This Nashville seven-piece, comprised of guitar, bass, cello, violin, piano, and percussion, recalls a harder version of the Rachel's or a more restrained Godspeed You! Black Emperor. However, the incorporation of vocals sets it apart from those post-rock instrumental acts. Their titles are mostly long, attempting to set the scene in themselves: "As the City Burned, We Trembled For We Saw the Makings of Its Undoing in Our Own Hearts" or "Gathered Hearts Rise and Sing at the First Breath of Dawn." The latter title is actually the name of the third movement of the last track, "If I Could Mountains." On "Molotov," the piano and strings are effectively interlaced while the drums jolt from erratic patterns to caffeinated climaxes. They really follow the Godspeed playbook on "A Threnody (For the Victims of November 2nd)," playing a lengthy recording of someone's political diatribe, adding a soundtrack in the background and their own vocal chorus towards the end. The music is quite affecting at times on this limited edition release, if not really breaking much new ground in the post-rock field. And, if you pick up the vinyl (in hand-crafted packaging), you get a CD version with it. (BA)

Angel or the Airbag, 323 N Spring St #2, Murfreesboro, TN 37130, [angelortheairbag.com](http://angelortheairbag.com)

### Bristle – 1984450

Bristle is back with a new release after a long hiatus from their Kings of Hardcore throne in the Northwest. Conrad Uno, the magnificent knob spinner at Egg studios, took his time in capturing the Bristle sound on 1984450, their best album to date. When hardcore acts return from the grave to do the reunion thing, it's often to cash in on popularity after the breakup. Bristle's motives are simple: after a few years playing with other outfits or taking personal time off from music, it just felt right to play again. Though hardcore in its fast form is a dying and overdone genre, this release feels fresh. Experience, tightness, and the ability to write quality songs is a formula that will work in any decade. And yet the question remains: should you go out and buy this? On my first listen, when the disc reached the fourth track and hit the bridge in "How Soon We Forget," I had that feeling of being 14-years-old at a hardcore show (almost 20 years ago) and actually got a tingling feeling. The guitar hooks are relentless and not overdone. If you aren't sold yet, then a cover of the Big Boys' "We're Not in it to Lose" should seal the deal. (EA)

Rodent Popsicle, PO Box 1143, Allston, MA 02134, [rodentpopsicle.com](http://rodentpopsicle.com)

### Call It Arson – S/T, CD

It's become something of a tradition these days that when my Punk Planet review material arrives, at least one album in the bunch will sound like Bright Eyes. And I must be honest; I wouldn't originally place my bets on Call It Arson. Nevertheless, this emotional quartet lay their mid-tempo drama rock on thick with titles such as "Here Comes the Flood" and "Butterflies Rape the Sound," the latter of which might win the award for the most oddly misappropriated song title of 2006. Somewhere, My Chemical Romance and Panic at the Disco are already scrambling to send in submissions for next year, guys, so don't rest on your laurels. (MS)

Kill Normal Records, PO Box 17 Durham, CT 06422, [killnormal.com](http://killnormal.com)



**Christ – Will We Always Be Blind Idiots?, CD**

Get past the heavy-handed socialist manifesto in the insert, and confrontational punk anthems await you. *Will We Always Be Blind Idiots?* is catchy and driven, if slightly ramshackle, out-and-out punk fueled by the judgmental verbiage of an oik who considers everyone else fascists or tools. His snide-faced moaning clarifies the band's agenda: to disparage artists who accept any money for their music; to pick on "alternative rock" (which is "a lot of crock"), the right and left wings ("opposite sides of the same capitalist venture"), education ("is it school or is it boot camp?"), and the list continues. Some may say it's the kick up the arse the corporate punks and the rest of us could use, but others will find the self-righteousness hard to stomach and the frankness somewhat frightening. (KG)

Self-released, 4147 N. Greenview, Chicago, IL 60613, christ-theband.com

**Coma Recovery, the – Drown That Holy End in Wine, CD**

When I first listened to this CD, what I liked about the Coma Recovery was similar to what I first thought about *Since by Man*. The music that now is referred to as "post-hardcore" really does feel like a natural progression and expansion of that powerful style of music, but in many ways, it feels a lot more satisfying because it appeals to more than one sense at a time. The Coma Recovery have all the thick power of what you'd expect from hardcore, but their songs are a bit of a roller coaster ride, taking you through a variety of feelings before each song climaxes. They'll start off strong with a good riff or hook that is usually pretty aggressive, and just when you get used to it, they suddenly stop or slow down and get a bit melodic and experimental. And, just as you lapse into a more experimental mood, they slowly build up to another big finish. These songs are simultaneously giving me a fix of power and melody without once falling into the trappings of that "emo" nonsense that is all the rage with the kids these days. I'm going to be keeping a watchful eye on the Coma Recovery, because I anticipate they'll be something pretty special. Kudos for the interesting presentation: the disc is packaged in a DVD-style digipak instead of a CD-sized one. (MXV)

Failed Experiment, failedexperimentrecords.com

**Cult Maze – The Ice Arena, CD**

Cult Maze is a group of seemingly goofy college kids with vanilla tastes who manage to make it work within the context of their own sound. Right off the bat, the track "Another A to Z" opens with a keyboard riff ripped straight from Phil Collins (or, at best, Phil Collins-era Genesis) but later launches into the kind of charmingly plodding nerd rock that Cult Maze pull off so well. The vocals and lyrics are sometimes grating, but let's just assume that comes with the territory. The recording quality is excellent for a first record on what I can only imagine is a limited budget. If you are in the Portland, Maine vicinity and need to record, you might want to look up Marc Bartholomew and Scott Elson, who are credited with the recording and mastering. Some of the standout tracks on *The Ice Arena*, such as "Oh My" and "The Mystik," exhibit a certain economy: so much is going on between the guitars, bass, keys, and drums, yet so little sonic

space is wasted in the phrasing, and the three and a half minute songs remain focused. I hesitate to call this kind of a band "mature," but musically, they are definitely a few steps ahead of the game. (JJC)

Self-released, myspace.com/cultmaze

**Death Before Disco – Barricades, CD**

After starting out so strong on their new album, *Barricades*, Death Before Disco seem bound to run into obstacles. Indeed, the sad fact is that after the brilliant one-two combination of opening tracks "Etireno" and "Barricades of Rumble," they fall back into a rut of ho-hum pop punk. So, what's so great about the first two tracks on the album? Like a young Fall Out Boy taken to their natural stadium-rock conclusion with the quirky mannerisms of vintage XTC, Death Before Disco offer a tantalizing glimpse of a new pathway for a tired-out genre to take. Unfortunately, they decide to turn back to Main Street before they get lost, which is a pity because more bands need to take the risk of occasionally getting lost. (CL)

LifeForce, lifeforcerecords.com

**Drunken Boat – S/T, CD**

There are many reasons to love *Drunken Boat*, including 1) Arthur Rimbaud as a namesake. 2) The way that Samia sounds just like the Muffs' Kim Shattuck. 3) "Golden Boys," one of those rough and honest, old and true songs about friends in jail, needles in parking lots, and the bus to Chicago. Unfortunately, these are also reasons to read Rimbaud, listen to the Muffs, and find your own ride to Chicago. *Drunken Boat* is earnest, but largely recycled and sometimes dull. Still, I'm sure the band's live show is twice as awesome, and I'll be waiting for the second album. (MC)

1234 Go, 1207 N.E. Alberta St. #138, Portland, OR 97211, 1234goorecords.com

**Falcon, the – Unicornography, CD**

While Alkaline Trio guitarist and vocalist Matt Skiba is off making some dark, tortured-sounding album (Heavens), bassist Dan Andriano has been off making fun music with Chicago (and Lawrence Arms) pals Brendan Kelly and Neil Hennessy. It's not all gloom and doom, (Matt! C'mon!) The Falcon's second effort, it's hard not to compare this to the Lawrence Arms, as two-thirds of the band usually reside in that camp, but while the music is from the same family tree (read: rough-around-the-edges pop punk), there's a slightly more out-there vibe to the whole thing. The lyrics are really bizarre, for one, and the music itself is just more quirky than the Lawrence Arms and more lighthearted than the Alkaline Trio. It's pretty obvious to this listener that the Falcon is not only a fun musical outlet, but also a place for songs that wouldn't quite fit into either chief project. For example, acoustic guitar-based (and sure to be crowd-pleaser) "Blackout" just isn't quite what you'd normally expect from any of these guys. At only 28 minutes long, *Unicornography* is incredibly easy on the ears and different enough from the members' full-time projects to feel less like a side project and more like an actual band. (DH)

Red Scare, redscare.net

**Fiel Garvie – Caught Laughing, CD**

Driven by singer Anne Reskie's gorgeous melodious whispers, Fiel Garvie's sleepy haze of melancholic

honcho/hipster radar. 3) They're openly queer, which is brave and important, but also risky, as far as mass marketing is concerned. 4) They're a male/female duo named after a bird, which means that every other critic compares them to Quasi, the Like, or Mates of State (Swallows sound a little like Quasi, but not much), and then cracks a joke about "no more bands named after wolves! Birds are the new black! Ever heard Swan Island?"

Basically, the Swallows' Emily Brownlowe (emBROWNLOWe) and Jonathan Miller have the shit end of a short straw. This fact probably isn't surprising to you, dear Punk Planeteeer, but that doesn't make it any less lame. Actually, it's super lame, because these kids have talent and hustle. They should pack basements, deserve jammed venues (all-ages, of course), and—in a few years—will definitely merit crammed clubs, cross-country.

Brownlowe and Miller are barely 20, but they've been playing together for almost three years. Before their avian incarnation, they called themselves Dirty Shirley, Led Kitten, Dot Dot Dot, and Yarokey, and they opened for the likes of Anna Oxygen, Rebecca Gates, and Emily Herring. The Swallows are young, but they've a fair amount of experience under their (star-studded, black plastic) belts. Here, it shows and shines. There are some obvious influences—I hear Riot-Girl rhetoric and vocal curls a la Mecca Normal's Jean Smith, plus obvious nods to Mama Cass and Lyn Hejinian—but there's also a lot that's genuine Swallows.

For one, there's Brownlowe's voice, which is always brightly clear, coming sometimes from the head and others from the gut. (Occasionally, she bleats like a mini-Corin Tucker.) There is the mix of guitar and keys (Brownlowe) with drums and melodica (Miller), a combination that none of the duos mentioned above use as consistently or innovatively. (See also "Surf Song OR," which features Dougher on organ and Brownlowe's voice, zooming from headphone to headphone.) There's a queer love song (cheekily titled "I'd Like to be Your Man"), and even cuckoo noises, sweetly hooted at the beginning and end of "All of the Wind in the World Blows to Me," a song that easily fills the darker corners of your head.

There are also empty metaphors. "Empty" doesn't mean "bad," it means "empty." There's a lot of taking off, of wind whistling, of standing on the edge. You could easily link these emotions to the four issues I mention above, or you could try being in your early 20s, too: There is a lot of emptiness to this period, but there's hope, too. Similarly *Me With Trees Towering* isn't a crowning achievement—there's plenty of room to grow—but it's a fine beginning, and I'm definitely looking forward to whatever these two will do next. —Mairead Case

Cheerchez La Femme Projects, cheerchezlafemmeprojects.com

**Acid Mothers Temple & the Melting Paraiso UFO – Have You Seen the Other Side of the Sky?, CD**

History is dead: long live history. So say Japan's Acid Mothers Temple on this, the tenth anniversary of the Melting Paraiso UFO's collective, and after 10 years, anyone familiar with the group should know what to expect. *Have You Seen* kicks off with the same kind of whirling improvised freakout that generally begins a Melting Paraiso UFO record, then settles into "Buy the Moon of Jupiter," a fine example of cosmic acoustic balladry this loose-knit group has made a career out of. Things begin

to change on the third track, "Asimo's Naked Breakfast: Rice and Shine," where the group gets in touch with the spirit of Gong (the two groups are tour-mates this fall through Japan and at a festival in Amsterdam) for a psych oddity supplemented most of the way through by a woman's moaning orgasm, ostensibly that of vocalist Nao, whose credits include "erotic voice, astral easy virtue." The highlights of these six tracks are the fourth, "I Wanna Be Your Bicycle Saddle," a sweaty, double-time romp replete with damaged guitars and astral mind daggers; "Interplanetary Love" follows that, the token mixtape material, a ghost-like acoustic dirge heavy on melodrama that sounds similar to past AMT cuts "Le Lapin" and the mellower material of "New Geocentric World." The real gem of this album is the long-awaited final cut, a 30-minute drone piece with a title as long as it takes to play ("The Tales of Solar Sail – Dark Stars in the Dazzling Sky"), one that's been a live staple for the band over the past few years and I've tried, fruitlessly, until now, to track down on record. After five minutes of a flute intro, the guitar cuts in, and I haven't had my ass kicked by this band like this since the first time I put on the C-side of *Pataphysical Freak Out MU!!* I realize that sounds so insider-like and lame, but it's true, and the only remedy I can recommend to anyone reading this, wondering why I've gone on at such length and made such little sense, is to go out and listen to this fucking track. It's a monster, it's huge, and it's the only song I can honestly say sounds like its title. (JJC)

Ace Fu, acefu.com



## REVIEWER SPOTLIGHTS

albums, also with a larger band. Most songs are in Spanish, but lyrics can be French or English, and he's even sung in Arabic, Portuguese within the same song. He's almost impossible not to like, with spot-on riffs and contagious melodies.

**Take Five:** Akron/Family, Meek Warrior; The Thermals, *The Body, The Blood, The Machine*; Jerk With a Bomb, Pyrokinesis; the Brian Jonestown Massacre, *We Are the Radio*; the Books, *Music For a French Elevator*.



### Reviewer Spotlight: Mike Barron (MB)

**Hero of a Hundred Fights, The Remote, The Cold EP.** Perhaps one of the most under-appreciated bands ever, Hero of a Hundred Fights tore it up until 2001 with their final (and by far best) release *The Remote, The Cold EP* on Divot Records. Dueling vocals and complex, hardcore guitar lines led this quartet down paths of math rock, screamo, hardcore, and even metal. The singer, William Zientara, joined Hero before the release of this record, and his arrival changed this band for the better. His signature, high-pitched chant-singing style can be heard on a lot of the math-rock stuff coming from Milwaukee between 1995 and 2005. There's something about this forceful scream-singing that is so totally unique—and that makes him a favorite singer of mine. Members of this band (including Zientara) have been in some of my other favorite Milwaukee bands, including Call Me Lightning, Managra, Fuigirnet, Murder in the Red Barn, Tintoretto, etc. Recorded by Steve Albini at Electrical Audio, this EP proves to be their most advanced and intricate record. Of course, they had to call it quits soon after, and I never got a chance to see them live. The short-lived Fuigirnet, my favorite of the Milwaukee scene, featured Zientara on vocals, but it came and disbanded over a year ago, only releasing a split 7" with Wolf and Cub. And now... there is nothing. Hero of a Hundred Fights, and all you other disbanded Milwaukee bands: you will be greatly missed.

**I like this now:** Nightmares on Wax, *In a Space Outta Sound*; The Shipping News, *Flies the Field*; V/A, *A Four Way Stop*; Xiu Xiu, *The Air Force* (reviewed this issue); Lifter Puller, *Half Dead and Dynamite*.

### Reviewer Spotlight: Joanna Buchmeyer (JB)

**Bush, Kate, The Dreaming.** In order to pay homage to Kate Bush as a major female musical artist and contributor, *The Dreaming* is the keystone to doing so. Her fourth album, it received the least amount of recognition compared to her other eight releases, placed the lowest on music charts, and had the smallest album sales when it was released in 1982, but highly deserves praise and recognition. *The Dreaming* has an interestingly distinct sound unique to her discography, yet still contains deep literary-influenced lyrics, her startling four-octave range voice, and dark, artsy-rock melodies—Kate Bush consistencies. What makes *The Dreaming* different from her other releases is the way her songs, specifically "Pull out the Pin," sound like dark tribal chants imitating African, Native American, and Aboriginal beats. Although this album only reached 48 on the UK pop charts in 1982, this album displays Bush's diversity and versatility as a lyricist and songwriter in a way her previous (and following) albums do not. Bush's bizarre intensity expressed in *The Dreaming* can be seen in the work of artists she's influenced, from the likes of Björk, Pat Benetar, Stevie Nicks, and Tori Amos. Up until I heard this album, the only bush I trusted was my own. Now, I trust two.

**A revolution is about to start:** Biff Bang Pow!, *Love is Forever*; Animal Collective, *Feels*; Tears for Fears, *Songs From the Big Chair*; New Order, 1981–1985; Talking Heads, *Stop Making Sense*



### Reviewer Spotlight: Mairead Case (MC)

**Iggy Pop, Lust for Life.** In the late '70s, Iggy Pop (AKA the Rock Lobster; AKA James Newell Osterberg, Jr., a kid from Muskegon, MI) moved to Berlin with David Bowie. There, Pop re-grew his eyebrows, did less heroin than before, and (somehow) wrote two albums, *The Idiot* and *Lust for Life*. The latter is full of non-sequitur punk and awkwardly perfect segues, as stamped by the creepiest high-school graduation headshot ever. I love it, which is strange because it's also full of misogyny and racism. Sure, I've spent nights arguing whether or not "Turn Blue" is a bold exorcism or a creepy song by a creepy fuck. But I also connect "The Passenger's" bright drum rolls with roughly every move or change I've made since age 20, and I totally believe the title track's take on love (it really is a lot like "hypnotizing chickens"). The only solution? Find the vinyl, listen to the whole, and make up your own mind.

**Just like a tire swing / Loving you is tiring:** TITS, Regina Spektor, *Begin to Hope*; Erase Errata, *Night Life*; Crooks and Nannies; High Street Orchestra, *When Eggs Go Rotten*.

### Reviewer Spotlight: Vincent Chung (VC)

**Garden Variety, Knocking the Skill Level.** When this came out in the late '90s, I remember the punk scene had a hard time categorizing it—and it was a time where subgenre mattered a great deal. For those who looked past the fact that they transcended labels and got it, got it. And what a brilliant album it was. *Knocking the Skill Level* was their second outing, following an album that had sealed them as a burgeoning East Coast (New Jersey, if you want to be specific) pop-punk outfit. Their second record—and their last—was noisy and discordant, but had this subtle melody that made it accessible. Somehow, this garnered plenty of very unfair Jawbreaker comparisons. It was an album that didn't draw upon its first hearing, as the songs meandered through plenty of dynamics, textured tempo changes, and other

shoe-gaze pop has a stunning way of seeping under the skin. Blanketed in analog warmth, eerily submerged backdrops, and softly layered swells, *Caught Laughing*—mixed by Geoff Allen (Camera Obscura, Belle & Sebastian, Mogwai)—bears lucidly emotive atmospherics. The Norwich quintet, furthered by the incorporation of extra musicians in the studio environment, has been releasing records since the early '90s, but prior to their recent partnering with various international labels, the band's exposure outside of England has been somewhat limited. Thankfully, this release should be accessible, after some minor searching, to the majority of Punk Planet's widespread readers. Beautiful and consistent, *Caught Laughing*, is a remarkable composition that's highly advised for those listeners with a predisposition for the mellow and mood-heavy. (BM)

Words on Music, 715 University Ave SE #201, Minneapolis, MN 55414, words-on-music.com

### Form of Rocket – Men, CD

It's rare that I don't enjoy a post-hardcore record with math-rock tendencies (or vice versa), and Form of Rocket is no exception. The guitars crank out complex and angular melodies comparable to any number of beloved Chicago math rock-ish bands, while the bass has an amazing drive and groove that, at times, reminds me a little of Shotmaker (although I should note Form of Rocket's songs aren't as structured around the bass as that of Shotmaker). The vocals are shouted and Form of Rocket's sound falls into the more angry camp of mathy bands. Overall, there's lots of interesting guitar work, but the album lacks a bit of the "wow factor" required to completely bowl me over. (KM)

Sick Room Records, PO Box 47830, Chicago, IL 60647, sickroom-records.com

### Ganglion – Of the Deep, CD

"Birthday Party, Khanate, the Hidden Chord, James Chance and the Contortions, HP Lovecraft, cyclopan architecture, Giant Squid." So reads the list of influences on the MySpace page of Minneapolis-based band Ganglion. That's one helluva list. Prying a little deeper into their *Avernus* of the Internet, I discover a set of cryptic images, seemingly suggesting that the band merely has one too many Alien Sex Fiend records in their possession. But placing the CD into my player, I discover a strange amalgam of sinewy, stripped-down proto-goth, a deformed hybrid of the morbid rattle of the Pop Group and Virgin Prunes with a twist of post-metalcore crunch for the kids. A little out of character, the singer screams invocations in a voice so hoarse that at times he's a dead ringer for Darkthrone's Fenriz. *Of the Deep* is such a strange black metal/goth hybrid that it actually works, making for some of the freshest new music I've heard in awhile. You'd have to go a long way (perhaps all the way to Innsmouth?), to find another such ungodly blend... bwoo hah hah! (CL)

Self-released, distributed by Profane Existence, profaneexistence.com

### Glue – Catch as Catch Can, CD

Glue's second full length after 2003's *Seconds Away*, *Catch as Catch Can* is better than its predecessor. Lyrically, Adem is as on fire as he ever, with his rapid-fire delivery and clever verses, but it's producer Maker

that's really stepped up his game—the beats sound more confident and full of life. It's this confidence that really sets Glue apart from many of their hip-hop peers. *Catch as Catch Can* isn't flawless (its main problem being that it runs a little long), but unlike a number of hip-hop releases, it succeeds in the fact that it's easy to listen to. The songs are diverse, the production funky and soulful, and the lyrics thought out, provided your brain can process the lyrics at the same speed Adem tends to spit them out. I can't forget DJ DQ, who controls the turntables and integrates them into the mix without being overbearing or seeking attention via scratching. While the songs about inner reflection and feelings aren't really my cup of tea, they're at least taken upon with an honest approach, not sounding synthetic in the least. With Glue's strong Midwest connections (the group has ties to Aurora, IL, Ohio, and New Hampshire), the album has a real Chicago feel, bringing to mind Typical Cats (Maker did a whole record with Typical Cats member Qwel) or the All Natural crew. For those looking for great, modern hip-hop releases that aren't on the radio or a huge label, Glue is an effortless choice. (DH)

Fat Beats, 110 Bridge St, 3rd Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11201, fat-beats.com

### Graves at Sea – Documents of Grief, CDEP

Insanely sludgy death doom out of Arizona. My word! These guys sound dirty, pissed, and ripped to the tits on opiates. The riffs are down tuned to hell, and the singer death pukes like John Tardy from Obituary. I'm not 100 percent sure, but I think this four-song dirge-out is a proper reissue of their demo. The liner notes indicate it was recorded back in 2003, and it sure has that raw, untamed sound that many demos have. That's not to say *Documents of Grief* sounds like it was done on the cheap, or that the band isn't tight. Quite to the contrary, it sounds inspired, like freshly squeezed ideas that coalesced without too much stress or strain. That's sort of the beauty of this doom metal stuff. When it's done right—the way Graves At Sea does it—the music just oozes out of the speakers all onto the floor, all the way across the room, up your pants, over your gut, up into your nostrils and creepy crawls all around your brain for (in the case of this album) around 30 minutes. Didn't Greg Ginn say something about a slow rolling tank doing more damage than a speeding bullet? Well, here's proof. (AJ)

20 Buck Spin, PMB 373, 5433-K Clayton Road, Clayton, CA 94517, 20buckspin.com

### Great Crusades, the – Four Thirty, CD

Something tells me my age is the reason I'd never heard of the Great Crusades before. The ballsy, heavy rock made by this Chicago foursome is intrinsically tied to smoke-choked bars, locales I've not been welcome to until the last two years. But hearing *Four Thirty*, the band's fifth album, makes me glad I'm legal. Led by Brian Krumm's deep and wobbly vocals (who can kindly be compared to Nick Cave or Tom Waits without the mush mouth), the Great Crusades plow through the 11 tunes on *Four Thirty* like boozehounds through a case of whiskey. Their beefy riffs are straightforward enough for fist-pumping, yet limber enough to boogie to. Lead guitarist Brian Leach doesn't aim for virtuosity, but rather crackling



leads that compel audience members to air guitar with scrunched up faces. Combined with Krumm's easy-riding rhythm guitar and the deft bass and drum work, their songs pack a punch. One of the group's greatest assets is Krumm's lyrical skills. Instead of weepy tributes to ex-girlfriends or a host of angst platitudes, Krumm croaks out unusual and detailed stories. The finished product is a distant, less dissonant cousin of thrashing weirdos Rye Coalition, or perhaps a nephew of Nick Cave and his Bad Seeds. Regardless, the Great Crusades have made an enjoyable rock 'n' roll record with *Four Thirty*, and they show no signs of mellowing out. Fellas, the next round of brews is on me. (SRM)

Innocent Words, PO Box 674, Danville, IL 61834, [innocentwords.com](http://innocentwords.com)

### Happy Hate Me Nots – *The Good That's Been Done*, CD

The *Good That's Been Done* is a two-disc collection of pretty much everything this Sydney, Australia band ever did in their near 10-year existence. The Happy Hate Me Nots came on the scene at a time when certain bands in the punk rock scene were heading in a more "college rock" direction (while the other half went metal) and started writing more power-pop songs in an effort to gain more acceptance. This band fits that mold perfectly; except, they were always a power-pop band, rather than morphing into one later in life. The songs are pretty catchy and enjoyable and will give you flashbacks to that era of independent music if you're old enough to remember it. Two discs is a lot to take in in one sitting, but there is certainly a handful of enjoyable tunes on here. The liner notes tell the tale of the band from beginning to end, and will make you dizzy in the amount of times you have to flip the book sideways to continue the story, but it's an interesting one nonetheless. (MXV)

Feel Presents, [feelpresents.com](http://feelpresents.com)

### Heads, the – *Under the Stress of a Headlong Dive*, CD

*Under the Stress of a Headlong Dive* is a lumbering giant of a record. Pay the price of admission and you'll get treated to post-grunge stomping, psych-rock epics and punk anthems descended right from the MCs. You get noisy interludes, sludgy blues numbers, and loads of screeching feedback. There's even what appears to be a fuzzy, boot-stomping tribute to Jello Biafra (I'll give you three chances to guess which San Francisco label released this little gem). But despite the diversity parading through this record's nearly 75 minutes, listeners may be surprised to hear how well the whole affair hangs together. Lesser bands could stumble between the bongo and Big Muff verses of "Pass, the Void" and, say, the glassy jazz asides of "EVP," but the Heads seem to not only benefit from the chasms but also make them feel somehow connected. And the few who arrive at disc's end unconverted need to look no further than "Creating in the Eternal Now is Always Heavy," whose scorching solos, Mountain-like chops and surges of noise are the ultimate acid-tinged head trip. (JV)

Alternative Tentacles, PO Box 419092, San Francisco, CA 94141, [alternativetentacles.com](http://alternativetentacles.com)

### Hella – *Acoustics*, CDEP

Seeing that *Hold Your Horse Is* and *The Devil Isn't*

Red are, in my opinion, two of the three finest Hella releases (with the *Total Bugs Bunny on Wild Bass EP* constituting the third), it should come as no surprise that a six-track EP of tunes predominantly from them, and reconstructed into acoustic versions, makes for a fantastic disc. Electricity-free renditions of "I-800-Ghost Dance," "Cafeteria Bananas," and "Biblical Violence" comprise three of the six songs and are alone worth the purchase. The new versions also create a sense of nostalgia for the two-member days of yore that resulted in vividly complex but markedly catchy songwriting. Now if only *Hella: Unplugged* could become a reality... (SJM)

5 Rue Christine, PO Box 1190, Olympia, WA, 98506, [src.com](http://src.com)

### HIM – *Peoples*, CD

This record is kind of kooky and wild. It's for peoples like undergraduates, professors, and perfectionists who enjoy experimenting with instruments and sounds. It's music to meditate or eat sushi to. It's all over the place, sounding like rainfalls, relaxation, and then the exact opposite. Quite soothing and unquestionably select in its expertise, *Peoples* was made by ex-members of June of 44, Codeine, Mice Parade and Sorts. HIM is perfect in its outbursts of horns, galvanized rhythm section, and woodwinds that would make for great chase scenes should Wes Anderson ever decide to make a private eye-styled picture. (SM)

Bubble Core, [bubblecore.com](http://bubblecore.com)

### Homostupids – *The Brutal Birthday EP*, 7"

I've been reading reviews of this 7" recently, and the Chrome comparison has been tossed around quite a bit. I can't say I disagree. They're not a rip-off, but I can see where critics might derive the comparison. The EP is comprised of six songs, all on one side. It only makes sense to me: the songs are all great, short blasts of some real oddball shit, and by putting them all on one side, it saves listeners the trouble of flipping it over. While all six songs blew me away, a few of them stuck out more than the others. The opening track, "Having a Houseguest," ropes you in with its primitive drumbeat, repetitive but catchy riff, and vocals that sound like the tape was crumpled up. "Waiting for the House" is an instrumental in the middle of the record that sounds like Devo writing a funk song for a Nintendo game. "Brutal Birthday" closes it out with an off-beat rhythm, distorted bass, and eerie sounding keyboard. Check back with me at the end of the year; this one will probably be at the top of my list, right next to the Pink Reason 7". (DA)

Richie, PO Box 63770, Philadelphia, PA 19147

### Human Abstract, The – *Nocturne*, CD

Giving a nod to Metallica's "Fight Fire With Fire" at the start of your album isn't a good idea if the rest of your album is this god-awful. Take a perpetually lisping teenage crooner, add a dash of inept neoclassical metal, plus a healthy dose of Hot Topic emo, and you'll have yourself an over-seasoned broth of the most unpalatable variety. You'll find not being a Ritalin-addicted seven year-old a positive disadvantage if you're hoping to get past the first few tracks on *Nocturne*. Suffice it to say, I found it a little hard going at times. File under: "For fans of Avenged Sevenfold." (CL)

Hopeless, [hopelessrecords.com](http://hopelessrecords.com)



### De Kift – *S/T*, CD

Staggeringly beautiful, brilliantly literate, and thrumming with original energy, *De Kift* are a wonderful surprise. Since 1988, the Dutch ensemble has explored the depths of folk and punk music without relying on other groups as reference points. Its members span two generations of musicianship, the balance of which allows *De Kift* to mine elements of traditional European folk music and meld them with the adventurous tendencies of punk rock and the avant-garde scene. But this is no Beirut; the amalgamation is entirely fresh

and wholly enjoyable. *De Kift* is actually a combination of the group's last two releases, *Vlaskoorts* (1998) and *Koper* (2001), and is their first album to see American shores. The songs are precisely-crafted vehicles for texts the group finds particularly profound, including works by Lord Byron, Flannery O'Connor, John Holt, and a host of lesser known but equally worthy writers. Lead vocalist Ferry Heyne (who also plays trumpet and trombone) switches off between passionately reading and singing the words in Dutch, acting as the narrator for the stories unfolding listeners' heads (thankfully, English translations are provided). The full-lunged tenor is joined by swells of the group's choral-styled unison vocals. *De Kift* foregoes the verse/chorus style for a more free-flowing, text-ordained structure, which works well with the untraditional, traditional arrangements. "Oo" ebbs and flows over a hollow guitar loop like a ghost knocking about in a coat closet. "So Long" follows the stomp of intertwined piano and guitar, with the caution of a man unsure of his abilities to resist a woman's gaze (as per the text). Tension also thrums through "The Village Tree," a morbid menagerie of teeth-on-edge guitar strums, spooky horn charts and shift percussion. Watershed piano tinkles, brazenly beautiful horn harmonies, restrained bass lines, and the handsome Dutch tongue make for instantly recognizable—yet entirely foreign—tunes. *De Kift* craft honey sweet melodies you can hold onto and sing along with, even if the syllables tripping from your lips are meaningless. Their superb choices for libretto and their tuneful casings reveal a wonderfully untouched talent ready to be heard. Considering the excellence encapsulated in this self-titled album, it won't be long until that's the case. (SRM)

North East Indie, PO Box 10315, Portland, ME 04104-0315, [northeastindie.com](http://northeastindie.com)



### Fat Worm of Error – *Pregnant Babies Pregnant with Pregnant Babies*, CD

Fat Worm of Error is mixing dangerous compounds in some underground noise laboratory. They seem to take some inspiration from the opening section of Pink Floyd's "Money" with crisp clanks and clangs of various machines, although these people crank at higher speeds. They squeeze noise alchemically from other instruments, everyday objects, and found things it seems—they generate percussion from about anything and whip it into extreme speeds, odd paces, and stop-starts. Mostly, though, they seem

to use basses and guitars, horns, synths, and a panoply of percussion. The inconstant female vocals chant, shriek, and groan somewhat like Kim Gordon in her more arty side-projects. The closest comparison for this noise outfit is perhaps Deerhoof—in fact, two of the members have been in Deerhoof in the past (as well as Angst Hase and Pfeffer Nase)—but this is way more chaotic and eccentric. They do so much: On "La Mort dans La Ville Du Bois Vert," motorcyle riffs criss-cross the speakers like Hell's Angels encircling prey; later it descends into warped strings and horns that moan like sad witches melting in Oz; for "Petulant Bureaucrats Pummeled With Peanut Butter," various things hum and buzz intensely like warped bees while it sounds as if a spaceship air battle is immediately overhead; and with "Let's Fool The Meat To Hassle The Room"—one of their rockers—everything bangs and metallic rattles serve as guitar shrieks for the 40-second piece. Some will surely find this "unlistenable" or call it "wankery," especially with vocals that try to be off-putting, but there are certain moments of brilliance and even beauty. When you mix dangerous compounds like this, sometimes things explode, sometimes you concoct something near gold, or if you're lucky, at least something makes you hallucinate a bit. It's deranged noise rock—reason enough for checking it out. (BA)

Load, PO Box 35, Providence, RI 02901, [loadrecords.com](http://loadrecords.com)



### Fix, the – *At the Speed of Twisted Thought*, CD

Back in 1981, four guys from Lansing, MI formed a little hardcore band, toured the country twice, put out two singles and then quickly vanished. They had no idea that their records would have any kind of lasting impact on anyone, let alone that people would pay huge money to acquire an original copy either one of their two 7-inches they released in their short time together (in fact, I still need a copy of the first one!). The Fix were one of the very first Midwest hardcore punk bands, and they also happened to be one

of the best despite the fact that in the big scheme of things, very few people ever got to hear their recorded output except on some lame bootlegs put together by record nerds trying to give an artificial boost to the value of their record collections. After more than two decades, Touch & Go finally decided to reissue this legendary band's recorded output, along with extras! The music is as raw and as powerful as you'd expect from 1980s hardcore. This was the template that hundreds of bands followed in their wake, and it stands up as good now as it did back then. This disc compiles their two 7-inches, the track from the *Process of Elimination* compilation, and a few unreleased demo and live tracks. Apparently the master tapes to this stuff were



## REVIEWER SPOTLIGHTS

general traits that were too challenging for a casual listen. But the pop hooks were buried so deep that listeners were compelled to take another listen. And then another. The songs are far from catchy, but definitely infectious. Sections of this album (that breakdown that comes a quarter into "Chatroom Walkout?" Holy shit!) will get stuck in my head, but I'll never be able to hum them, and there's a certain beauty in that elusiveness.

**Five to Stay Alive:** Blind Guardian, *A Twist in the Myth*; Icepick, *Violent Epiphany*; Current 93, *Thunder Perfect Mind*; V/A, *The Complete Motown Singles, Volume 1: 1959–1961*; Three Mile Pilot, *Another Desert, Another Sea*.



### Reviewer Spotlight: Art Ettinger (AE)

**Squiggy, *Songs About Hate, Anger and the American Way*.** New Jersey's Squiggy formed in 1995 and spent the second half of the '90s putting out a series of 7-inches that defined the era's oi!/street punk revival. This CD on Headache Records is their only full length to date, and it's a must-have for anyone with even a slight interest in this oft-misunderstood subgenre. Many of the songs appeared in different forms on the band's EPs, but the re-recordings are a rare breed in that they surpass the originals on all levels. The powerful working class anthems featured here include "The Hands of Time," "Score One," "Middle Class Rebellion," and my personal favorite, "Hang the Lawyers." Musically, they're definitely more influenced by US oi! than European oi!, although they're even faster than most hardcore-influenced oi!. The songs contain tempo changes more commonly found in other types of punk. From the front cover image of a tattered flag on down through the pro-unity lyrics, they're a refreshing change of pace in a scene full of negativity. Squiggy never broke up and periodically announces that they'll be returning to songwriting. Let's hope they make a comeback sooner rather than later, as a return of these oi! heroes is long overdue.

**These records are still keeping me happy as the year nears its end:** Caustic Christ, *Lycanthropy*; Lower Class Brats, *New Seditaries*; the Dwarves, *FEFU DVD*; The Casualties, *Under Attack*; V/A, *Everybody Loves ANTISEEN*.

### Reviewer's Spotlight: Kristen Grayewski (KG)

**Sugarcubes, the, *Stick Around for Joy*.** In 1992, an eclectic, precocious bundle of joy was released to the world at large. Its voice an operatic yelp and its disposition appealingly silly, *Stick Around for Joy* from the Sugarcubes (the band best known as the one Björk mothered before her solo career took off) is an album of dream-like mellifluous jangle, occasional absurdity, and a remarkable sense of honeyed melodies. This, their third and final album, is full of tracks so hodge-podge that they sound anti-hit-single even while the album as a whole summons the joy of a birthday party at a roller rink. What's not to love? Well, there is the way member Einar Orn Jars Björk's soaring vocals with spoken broken-English interjections; when his verbal input is kept in the background, though, it adds further whimsy. Mostly, this album is just a fat slice of funk-infused indie heaven with sprinkles. Take the uncomplicated dazzle of "Lucky Night," when Björk vocalizes with staggering gusto about how she gets really excited when she does two things at once: "To read a letter and to fall in love / to not sleep and be not unhappy." There's also the part in the as-good-as-songs-get "Walkabout," when Björk delightfully cries "I want to be there / right with you / that's where I'm staying / where no one can find me." There, she vocalizes the type of escapism mirrored in the glorious landscapes of the guitar lines and the confounding range of her voice. There, it's always a happy birthday.

**2 parts current listens, 3 parts b-day wish-list:** M. Ward, *Post-War*; V/A, *The Kids at the Club*, *An Indiepop Compilation*; Dexy's Midnight Runners, *Don't Stand Me Down*; Yo La Tengo, *I Am Not Afraid of You, and I Will Beat Your Ass*; The Wrens, *The Meadowlands*.



### Reviewer Spotlight: Eric Grubbs (EG)

**Therapy?, *Infernal Love*.** Ireland's Therapy? was like a secret handshake in my high school. The few fans that I knew would say their name with a deepening of the voice and a widening of the eyes. This trio had something special going on, but nobody could really explain what exactly it was. Upon hearing *Hats Off to the Insane* and *Troublegum*, I think I knew what was up. Up until that point, Therapy? had a string of singles, mini-albums, and records that were very melodic and punky but also sounded like Prong and Helmet records. Yet on '95s *Infernal Love*, the cold industrial sounds were replaced by smoother sounds coupled with a wider scope of songwriting. From barnburners like "Stories" and "Misery" to the Police-like "Bad Mother" to the stellar singles of "Jude the Obscene" and "Loose" to the peaceful "Moment of Clarity," *Infernal Love* is probably the band's finest album start to finish. Also special of note is their strings-and-vocals version of Hüsker Dü's "Diane." Reworking the song like Nick Cave fronting the Kronos Quartet, the song goes to a much sinister place than the original ever did. The band released a handful of records after *Infernal Love* and is still going today. They've never reached above a secret handshake for many in the US, but for what they do, that's quite all right.

**There was this big bang once:** Cursive, *Happy Hollow*; TV on the Radio, *Return to Cookie Mountain*; Wilco, *A Ghost is Born*; Blackpool Lights, *This Town's Disaster*; Converge, *You Fail Me*.

### I Love You But I've Chosen Darkness – According to Plan, CDEP

Thirteen minutes, apparently, is all these guys need to envelop you. This bite-size, three-song offering packs as much of an emotional punch as the lauded *Fear is On Our Side*, the full-length platter the Austin quintet released just a handful of months before this. Maybe it's the sequencing or Paul Barker's crisp production—all clean edges and '80s-pop-hued. The obscenely catchy outtakes certainly don't hurt: a pair of atmospheric odes saturated with dreamy synth washes, reverb-laced vocals, and—oddly enough—soaring guitar refrains not far removed from the crescendos of *Godspeed You! Black Emperor*. The whole record, despite its brief running time, just sings—as good an introduction to the band as it is an addendum to their growing success. (JV)

Secretly Canadian, 1499 W. Second St., Bloomington, IN 47403, [secretlycanadian.com](http://secretlycanadian.com)

### Invincible Czars, The – Gods of Convenience, CD

Conceptually speaking, the thought of free-jazz and chamber music intermingled with Eastern European traditional methods and straight up metal curdles any sense of appeal. Although it's inconsistent, Austin's Invincible Czars occasionally succeed in mastering their strange brew. Counterbalanced by faults, their shortcomings are embodied in a lack of restraint. In their finer moments, the quintet of drums, guitars, bass, trumpet, and keys brings to mind the likes of early Mr. Bungle, World Inferno Friendship Society, and Sweep the Leg Johnny. Unfortunately, they attempt too much and their more experimental efforts are riddled by an obvious lack of aptitude, giving the said sections a forced feel. Furthermore, their occasional delving into ska taboos, extended dirt weed jam sessions, and self-serving-solo-indulgence stand out as unimpressive and awkward within the context of the album's overall movement. Perfecting the circus splicing of such widespread influences is a task for the few and proud. While there's a rickety foundation in place, the Invincible Czars are thoroughly exceeded by their oddball peers. (BM)

Above Suspicion, [invincibleczars.com](http://invincibleczars.com)

### Invisible-5 – S/T, 2xCD

When driving, I've often thought of how cool it would be to have some kind of Internet hookup connected to a global-positioning device that would line up some audio about the surrounding landscape—its geology, local history, even music scene samples. If we had something like that, I'd link up to Invisible-5's self-titled album when driving I-5 between LA and San Francisco, but since it's a CD you can hear it now. This is a double disc with a little booklet detailing spots along the route that are significant for political and environmental reasons. It notes power plants and their histories of toxic leaks and the accompanying effects on the local population; detailing why some stretches have poor visibility due to smog; areas where Native Americans were forcibly expelled from their traditional lands; lands where the crops are poisonous with heavy pesticide use, and so on. It's not just talk either—it's modeled after a museum audio tour and really sounds more like a radio documentary. Rather than someone just reading, there are

clips from television and radio reports, audio from protests, oral histories, and archival samples. Plus, these are often backed by soundtracks whose music also serves as interludes, allowing time to consider these thoughts as you take in the landscape at about 70 MPH. If you are driving that stretch or plan to drive it in the future, pick this up. No doubt any band touring the west coast might find this a welcome diversion from music and a way to draw attention to the landscape they're passing through. It's a commendable project to bring the politics of a landscape in a way that's novel and immediate, adding an experiential element that really helps drive home these stories. Let's hope that all the highways get their due in a production like this. (BA)

[invisible5.org](http://invisible5.org)

### Ivy League, the – London Bridges, CDEP

As the dulcet voices of New York City transplants the Ivy League bounce into the ears, the desire grows to check your CD player to see if a disc was mislaid. The duo makes a precarious mix of buoyant indie pop and stripped down acoustic ballads which bank on their sweet and highly familiar vocals. "London Bridges" lacks the crammed detail of Of Montreal but knowingly uses similar song structure. The rest of *London Bridges* relishes in recreating the style of hushed acoustic ballads Kings of Convenience borrowed from Simon and Garfunkel. Alex Suarez and Ryland Blackinton take it a step further and sing plaintive harmonies nearly identical to those created by their Norwegian idols. Oftentimes it's the vocals playing the leading role in order to thicken up rudimentary guitar lines, which is better than ignoring their shortcomings. Though the Ivy League seems a bit like an indie cover band at the present (they close the EP with an Arcade Fire song), they could prove promising provided they take some chances and expand their palate. (SRM)

Twentyseven, 343 South West 184 Way, Pembroke Pines, FL 33029, [twentysevenrecords.com](http://twentysevenrecords.com)

### Junior Boys – So This Is Goodbye, CD

People call this "electro-pop." While it's clear that the pulse (on repeat, most doot-doots and pum-pums sound like a heartbeat) is comprised of wires and chips, I'm not comfortable tagging something this slow-brewing "pop." You won't find any wham-bam here. These guys do something with time—take it apart like a jigsaw, piece together new metronomes, and watch the second hands keep the back 'n' forth beats. Rather than slowing time down, they make you not care about its ticking outside of their sleek, slinky neon world. I'm usually not taken with electronic music because of its impersonality, inevitability, and flawlessness, but here, life is supplemented by Jeremy Greenspan's mega-melancholic emotional ooze-of-a-voice and Matt Didemus's ability to coax sweat from his machines. Bleeps, drum machine, and synth are ever-present, but the sound isn't all throwback; it simultaneously hovers on a timeline somewhere over 1981 and 10 years from now. Moments stand out as exceptional: during "The Equalizer," when the keys change their tune as Greenspan sighs over them, "Spriiingtime, you'll wish that we were



friends"; during the dazzling "Count Souvenirs," in which the lyrics describe commonplace things in place of someone who is absent, when the change-up elicits the line "hotel lobbies like painful hobbies that linger on"; and during "In the Morning," when gasps and sighs over the beats make it sound like a computer is crying. The splendor is in the transitions and the sustained notes, when the Junior Boys manage to change the emotional state of machinery and put us on pause. (KG)

**Domino**, 55 Washington St, Suite 458, Brooklyn, NY 11201, dominoecordco.us

### Jurado, Damien – *And Now That I'm in Your Shadow*, CD

Underrated Seattle-based singer/songwriter Damien Jurado is back with a small cast of musicians in tow and 13 new songs with which to fall in love. His voice is as heartbreakingly delicate as ever on *And Now That I'm in Your Shadow*, and he's in his element playing sparse, lo-fi acoustic tunes like "I Had No Intentions" and "I Am Still Here," while tastefully rounding out the rest of the record with rich, melodic tracks such as "Denton, TX" and the ethereal closing song, "Montesano." Regardless of how much additional musicianship is added, Jurado and his stories are always the centerpiece, and that's fine with me. (SK)

Secretly Canadian, 1499 W. Second Street, Bloomington, IN 47403

### Killing Joke – *Hosannas From the Basements of Hell*, CD

It is pretty amazing that for as long as Killing Joke has been around, their track record has been better than most bands who have been around only a fraction of the time. I can only name off the top of my head one Killing Joke album that I heard and didn't like at all, and that was 1987's *Brighter Than a Thousand Suns*, where the band failed their obvious attempt at commercial pop success, only to redeem themselves a couple years later with one of their best albums ever, *Extremeties*, *Dirt* and *Various Repressed Emotions*. Age has been rather kind to the band since that album, as this one packs nearly as much of a punch. This time out, Killing Joke has a thicker sound, due perhaps to the strange mix. There are still the trademark, atmospheric guitar sounds, the meaty bass, and the pissed-off vocals. The songs drive ahead at a steady pace but are usually accented by some keyboards, and there's that trademark Killing Joke melody that hooked me in as a teenager and which I still pine for today. It's rare that a band this old can still put out new music that you actually give a shit about without altering their sound to try and fit in with what's selling these days, and I'm glad these guys can still pull it off. (MXV)

Cooking Vinyl USA, cookingvinylusa.com

### Lesser Birds of Paradise, the – *Space Between*, CD

You know those slow, pretty songs on the Weakerthans' records? Well, this record is full of stuff like that. I point to the famed Canadian band, because the vocals bear some resemblance to John Samson's singing voice; however, they are less brainy and less conversational. Brushy drums and acoustic guitars carry the 13 tracks, but surprisingly, don't get old at all. A cover of the lullaby "You Are My Sunshine" is probably the most disappointing track on *Space Between*, but it's located

at the very end. Overall, this is a good late-night record as it's best enjoyed in a relaxed state. (EG)

Contraphonic, PO Box 2203, Chicago, IL 60690, contraphonic.com

### Mexican Cheerleader – *Mexican Mystery Tour*, CDEP

These are eight songs that I can say "hell yes!" to. At their base, Mexican Cheerleader play some glammy, glitter rock kicked in the ass by bouncy garage rock. I know that sounds like a lot of bands, but these guys do a way better job than a number of bands I've heard in the last few years. I've heard one too many groups focus on loosey-goosey guitar bends and vocal who-hoos instead of sweet melodies. Well, Mexican Cheerleader definitely gets the fun vibe right, but they go the extra mile by putting dirty power pop front and center. Definitely check out its prime track, "King Kong," complete with a cowbell and "do-do-do-do" falsetto backing vocals. (EG)

Underground Communique Records, PO Box 14334, Chicago, IL 60614, undercomm.org

### Miss Violetta Beauregarde – *Odi Profanum Vulgus et Arceo*, CD

True story: I couldn't finish listening to *Odi Profanum*. . . (translation: "I hate the common crowd and I spurn them") until I knew what Miss Violetta Beauregarde looked like. I think I wanted to be sure that she was real. The Internet said "yes," and showed me an Italian woman with eyebrow piercings and eyes staring like an angry, post-therapy Ramona Quimby. I stared back, then continued listening to this, her second album. Essentially, it sounds pissed off and bruising to violet, as looped through one woman and a computer. Beauregarde screams intensely enough to launch lungs to sidewalk, and writes the best song titles of '06, if not the entire decade previous. Examples include: "I'm Wolverine and You're a Walrus and I'm Kicking Your Ass," "The Unbearable Lightness of a Farm Tractor," and "I'm the Tiananmen Square Guy and You All are the Fucking Tanks." I'm in love. (MC)

Temporary Residence Ltd., PO Box 60097, Brooklyn, NY 11206, temporaryresidence.com

### Morello – *Twelve Ways to Breathe*, CD

Morello wrote some interesting songs on *Twelve Ways to Breathe*, and it's always refreshing to hear something with a bit of originality. The guitars and songs in general are all over the place—noisy, loud, and bouncing from one riff to another. There's a bit of art-rock influence here as some of the guitar lines are discordant, almost atonal at times. I'm tempted to use Blonde Redhead as a point of reference, even though Morello sounds nothing like them. The vocals seemed typical of whatever bands Victory Records has on the radio these days, with cleanly sung "emotional" outpourings on the verses and then pissed off, screamed vocals during the chorus. This reminded me too much of stuff I've heard on MTV, and I found it a little off-putting. As far as the music goes, though, I have to give Morello a high five for their original approach. (KM)

I Scream, PO Box 46608, LA, CA 90046, iscreamrecords.com

### Mr. Move, the – *Easy*, CD

So this dirty dude named Reggie from New York started making electronic beats and rapping to them and called it the Mr. Move. The whole idea that Reggie

lost years ago but whatever source material they had to go off of was really good, because I wouldn't have known the stuff wasn't used had it not said so in the liner notes. The live stuff even sounds really good and it's amazing someone even had a tape of something that old! The booklet reproduces the 7" covers, the insert to Jan's Room, and has plenty of really interesting liner notes from one of the band members as well as people like Henry Rollins, Thurston Moore, Tesco Vee (the man responsible for bringing the Fix to the world in the first place), and Byron Coley. Just like the Blight CD, it's great to see this stuff finally being made available to people who missed it the first time without having to use their mortgage money to buy it. (MXV)

Touch & Go, touchandgorecords.com



### Phil Carnage – *It Is What It Is*, CD

Fact: people who make music for the sole purpose of hearing their own name on repeat only prove that they have nothing worthwhile to say. Even when given a small disc with the capability of containing up to 80 minutes of music, nothing else exists outside of that particular line of vision. In that respect, "Ill" Phil Carnage has thick blinders on, and they would seem to be pointed at his visage in a mirror. Truly, the problem with music starts when it's taken as nothing more than a joke, made for no purpose other than to

stroke the ego of the artist who put it forth. The sad thing is that Ill Phil is completely serious throughout this small minded, immature, sexist tirade of an album, as he rhymes about the most empty, superficial fixations, name dropping synthetic porn stars while attempting to growl out some aggressive proclamation of his own greatness. If it isn't about having sex, it's about taking a girl home, and if it isn't about taking them home it's about how one time they sucked him off—but then he of course has the good sense to thank his grandparents in the liner notes. This must be what it's like to be inside the mind of a man who thinks he's the only person on earth with a penis. What is offered here is a self-involved, tired regurgitation of Limp Bizkit and Linkin Park, but without the unwarranted commercial success. Further, it is put forth by a bland MC with a misplaced anger complex and a nonexistent sense of creativity, rhythm, or confidence in his own flow—which is no small wonder when the rhymes are so flaccid. Completely devoid of hooks, the only thing being slaughtered here is Carnage's own career. By spitting about nothing relevant to anyone outside of himself, he only proves himself to be the worst kind of bigot, and this is the aural equivalent of used toilet paper being shoved down your mouth. (SBM)

Suga Shack Entertainment, sugashackentertainment.com



### Maps of Norway – *Sister Stations*, CD

Pointing out the problems on *Sister Stations* is easy. To be clear, the record is not loaded with flubbed notes or smooth-jazz covers of Ramones songs. None of the songs are about thugs. None instruct listeners how to do a novelty dance. No, the flaws on this record are particularly evident because most of the album is quite good, and when an arrangement or line that does not match the quality of the rest of the album, it has nowhere to hide. In other words, the record is like an otherwise good apple with an ugly bruise showing

through the skin. If pointing out the problems—some flat singing and the occasional resemblance to Interpol—is easy because they are so obvious, ignoring or forgiving them is just as easy because Maps of Norway gives listeners so much to like. In general, the band has not introduced any new styles. Instead, it studies post-punk and dance punk, two genres that have been en vogue for most of this decade. The band avoids completely cloning the usual suspects—Joy Division, New Order, and Gang of Four—by doing three things: It inserts abrupt shifts in the arrangements and atmospheric interludes, the rhythm section tries to hypnotize listeners with its grooves, and the band lets a woman sing for once. "Traffic" opens the album with white noise, scraped guitar strings, and Jeff Ball's adventurous drumming. The introduction is a preemptive measure that distracts the listener from bass player Matt Helgeson's impersonation of New Order's Peter Hook throughout the rest of the track. A somewhat experimental track, "4 Digit Six," breaks down and reloads with a wheezing keyboard line straight out of a Dr. Dre production. In "Manners," Ball and Helgeson's instruments summon Ian Curtis' spirit to dance maniacally in front of the stage. Then, Eric Hanson mechanically strums his guitar, and Rebecca Leigh sings like Patti Smith. Like "Traffic," "Matches" begins with solo drumming. The band sets aside the initial rhythm for a long verse of skipping rock. The chorus brings back the drum motif, but this time, it leads to a reverb-heavy guitar interlude, Leigh's careful vocals, and a less aggressive tempo. Finally, the band essentially combines all the separate sections of the song before repeating the main rhythm motif at the song's climax. During such moments, it seems that Maps of Norway has found the path to a fine sound of its own. (JM)

Guilt Ridden Pop, PO Box 11894, St. Paul, MN 55111, guiltriddenpop.com

### Mass Movement of the Moth/Catalyst – *Two Thousand and 666*, CD

I'm really excited to review this one because not only do I already own this on vinyl, but I'm actually going to see Mass Moth play tonight! Anyway, this is a fun split from the always excellent Perpetual Motion Machine and Electric Human Project labels. I should note that instead of designating a band to each side the tracks are split, so that through the entire LP/CD the bands are taking turns: one Moth song, one Catalyst song, etc.



## REVIEWER SPOTLIGHTS

### Reviewer Spotlight: Dave Hofer (DH)

**Casket Lottery, the, *Moving Mountains*.** Poor emo. The genre has gone from such greats as bands like I Hate Myself and Braid to whatever it is today. Bummer. Thankfully, records are forever, and Kansas City's the Casket Lottery put out a few brilliant ones. The second of three full-length albums released on Second Nature, *Moving Mountains* is a phenomenal example of feelings being spooned directly out of someone's heart and cut into grooves. The Casket Lottery is one of the few bands who only got better with time, writing heartbreaking songs that almost feel uplifting, but the music—especially the vocal arrangements—is just too despondent-sounding to be entirely happy. Like that episode of the *Simpsons* where Bart claims you're able to "pinpoint the second" Ralph Wiggum's "heart rips in half," my sympathies really extend to vocalist and guitarist Nathan Ellis, because the guy sounds like he hasn't had a good day in years. The trio's music is the fidgety guy who can't think of the right thing to say to a girl; the digging of one's shoe toe into the ground when nervous. *Moving Mountains* has been my go-to album after two different breakups, and lyrics like, "it's raining outside / of course we have to fight" were right there, answering my plea for sympathy. Nine short songs long, this record is made for the repeat switch on your CD player or stereo.

**And if the world ends in our sleep / at least we will be in the same dream:** Casket Lottery/Small Brown Bike, *Split*; Get Rad, *Say Fuck No to Rules*; Man; Dennis Wilson, *Pacific Ocean Blue*; Edan, *Beauty and the Beat*; Nuclear Assault, *Handle With Care*.



### Reviewer Spotlight: Ari Joffe (AJ)

**Fu Manchu, *Return to Earth 91-93*.** Fu Manchu was the first stoner rock band I got into. I remember seeing their video for a song called "Evil Eye" on this public access heavy metal show back in the late '90s, and I was instantly hooked. The sound, the vibe—it was exactly what I was looking for. They totally reminded me of Mudhoney (who weren't really doing much at the time), but slightly more metal and way more rehearsed. So, as an addictive personality such as me will do, I had to run out and buy as much Fu Manchu as I could get my grubby little paws on. My interest in their music has waned over the course of their last few albums (too polished and/or they're treading the same ground they already mastered), but their early material blasts from my boom box on the regular. *Return to Earth 91-93* collects their first three EPs—released between 1991 and 1993—on one disc. It's the Fu at their darkest, fuzziest, grungiest best. The guitars are super thick and muffled, and the vocals are sung in a real lackadaisical "dude" type of way. And the music just grooves. It's got a hip-shaking quality to it. If Jeff Spicoli from *Fast Times at Ridgmont High* and three of his chiba monkey buddies were living in some flop house, working shit jobs, and ditched the whole surfing thing in favor of muscle car racing, this would be the soundtrack to their lives.

**Keeping rock 'n' roll evil:** Acid King, *Ill*; Imperial Battlesnake, *Attack*; Coudron, *Four Winds*; Eternal Elysium, *Searching Low & High*; Trilog, *Demo 2006*.

### Reviewer Spotlight: Steve Kane (SK)

**Magnetic Fields, the, *The House of Tomorrow*.** A few years before Stephin Merritt composed his three-disc opus, *69 Love Songs*, he released the frequently overlooked *House of Tomorrow* EP. In comparison to his later work, the five songs here are hardly as grand or ambitious, but they are warm and endearing. Each song is roughly two-and-a-half minutes of looped, sampled beats, and sporadic instrumentation with Merritt's trademark baritone as the guide. In fact, if it weren't for lyrical variation the songs would go nowhere as there is no musical transition. Like most of his records, the subject of love is predominant throughout the record, and Merritt's metaphors and poetics are at a peak with lines like, "You and me in the waiting room / of a disused railroad station / scavenging for a few antiques / We'll make a fortune just have patience / If we find an old signal box you can write your dissertation." *House of Tomorrow* is not the crowning jewel of Stephin Merritt's prolific career, but it is a diamond in the rough worthy of discovering.

**Seasonal Change:** Elliott, *False Cathedrals*; Au Revoir Simone, *Verses of Comfort, Assurance and Salvation*; Company Flow, *Funcrusher Plus*; Gracer, *Voices Travel*; Cat Power, *The Greatest*.



### Reviewer Spotlight: Chay Lawrence (CL)

**Septic Death, *Now That I Have Your Attention, What Do I Do With It?*** The overriding impression I have of Septic Death will always be one of complete disorientation. Always seemingly struggling with some adversity, just beyond earshot, either technical or of a more metaphysical nature, Septic Death exuded an air of complete dishevelment on numerous levels. While on occasion they played spluttering inept hyper-speed hardcore in the sub-Negative Approach vein, at other times they'd drop in a ton of effects, on the guitar, vocals, and bass... hell, why not on everything? Dwid called it "horror hardcore"—he wasn't wrong. Like a weird early Factory Records side—project filtered through the unreleased *Void* album, Septic Death's legacy is one of horror and lunacy, the embodiment of an era in hardcore when it was OK for Siege to drop in an extended saxophone break on a lengthy noise track. Dripping with a dreadful expectancy (and a ton of reverb), the songs on *Now That I Have Your Attention, What Do I Do With It?* prefigure a horror never fully realized, but nonetheless terrifying. While still known to many as merely being "Pushead's band," Septic Death's legacy is one of the foremost in American hardcore of the 1980s, and every bit as strange and unique as their singer's artwork.

presents in the Mr. Move is heavily image based: be as skuzzy as possible, at all times, in every aspect of this musical endeavor. If a white dude wants to dip into the rap/hip-hop scene, I'm all for it, but what I'm not for is the way he downgrades this genre, although he is producing music in it. The beats are simple, and so is Reggie's brainwave pattern. Tee hee hee, he compares a hamburger to a woman's rump! Har, har, har... Reggie thinks all women should have "titties full of beer!" Even the excuse of irony couldn't save this skeezoid's sad songwriting ability. The easiest thing about the Mr. Move's album was when I removed the disc from my CD player and stuck it under my drink. (JB)

**Booty Bomb, themrmove.com**

### My Lost Cause – Dying for the Cure, CD

You know who would have really creamed for this band about five years ago? Everyone. Especially Drive Thru Records and Fueled by Ramen. It's hard not to feel a tinge of sadness for this band that you fear might have missed the boat on a genre that's bound to come back around, but will they still be here? *Dying for the Cure* is a strong enough record that it could resurrect some of those old feelings for Saves the Day and Everclear, bringing them together in congregation for some more dancing and weeping over problems. These are swooning boys, but Derek Jones' dynamite vocals and un-sapped up lyrics are the focal points for this album that harnesses a lot of power, a lot of drive, a lot of creativity, and even more heart. You hope it's not too late for them to make a go of it. (SM)

**Self-released, mylostcause.com**

### New Alchemy, the – Organic Universe, CD

Per Svensson is the originator of the New Alchemy, and this is his second album of gothic, experimental rock from his base in Sweden. The lyrics and artwork are doused in the occult arts and mysticism: all-seeing eyes, snakes eating their own tails, mandalas, skeletons, death images, and wonderful symbol-rich images from ancient alchemical manuals—all of which provides nice packaging for the lyrics and liner notes. Most of the work is guitar-based, often folksy but also drone, within environs of acid-noise guitar, sound samples, and psych-rock rumbles. Svensson started out in Gothenburg punk scene, and a glimpse of those elements can be heard this latest trajectory. Some tracks can be noisy in an industrial manner, as "Crashing Guitars Against Amplifiers," but other pieces can be gently blissful like "The Light of the Sun" or "Information Rain." On "Medication/Illumination," you hear the clear influence of Velvet Underground psychedelia, even doing the spoken vocals. It's a late-night album, perfect for lonely, rainy evenings, or material for an all-night drive with headlights, streetlamps, and darkness. Next time around, I hope the New Alchemy have a budget to mix it up, so it's a headphone playground as well. (BA)

**IDEAL, idealrecordings.com**

### New London Fire – I Sing the Body Holographic, CD

Full of faux-love songs that self-consciously attempt to be quirky, New London Fire specializes in a strange breed of soft rock with a nasally lead vocalist that sounds half comatose most of the time. No surprise there—seems most people would have the same problem if they too had to sing such derivative pap.

Though the band claims to be cinematic, everything here is toned down, mid-tempo, and muddled, at times sounding like a synth orchestra jam put into the hands of vaguely restless twentysomethings. Listening to this—their debut album—is like drinking tepid water and being mildly offended by how bland it is. It is white rice and padded corners, completely and intentionally harmless—and only through that fact does it become truly distasteful. (SBM)

**EyeBall, PO Box 179, Kearny, NJ 07032, eyeballrecords.com**

### No Pasaran – Plug Into The Sand, CDEP

Considering the influx of tame pop punk that the Garden State has been cranking out for years, it's pleasing to come across a band from the area that packs some grit. No Pasaran utilizes a fair amount of DC post-punk tactics, primarily those of angular surface-level guitar play, rhythmical dance breaks, and atypical transitions. The lyrics, direct and pointed at Jersey's rusted urban ruin and Brooklyn's social pecking order, provide for some interesting concrete points within a sound that's continuously in flux. There's a lot of potential in No Pasaran's knack for creative guitar multi-parting and tactful production, but there's weakness in their regular disjointing and Tom Barrett's nasal speak-sung vocals that are dangerously derivative of Les Savy Fav. Keep your distance, but maintain a scout's ear as the band develops. (BM)

**No Pasaran! c/o Romel Espinel 1005 Central Ave. #28 Union City, NJ 07087, myspace.com/pasarnno**

### Now It's Overhead – Dark Light Daybreak, CD

*Dark Light Daybreak* is more than a poetic album title. It accurately captures the mood of the third LP by Andy LeMaster's project Now It's Overhead. Sure, the lyrics repeat a few key words to create a mood of limbo, and LeMaster writes sturdy melodies, but the record's mood really emerges from LeMaster's production. He concentrates on in-between sounds. Electric piano chimes but, at the same time, sounds muted and percussive. Lead and backing vocals collide and begin to drone. Borrowing My Bloody Valentine's sound, guitars simultaneously strum and squall. The competing, ambiguous sounds form a sonic gloaming. In the end, LeMaster's melodies tend to rise, bend higher in pitch, and reach for the heavens. The record's mood moves away from the twilight and toward the dawn. Although dawn brings uncertainty, it also brings hope, bridging the negative to the positive. *Dark Light Daybreak* is not a terribly exciting or catchy record; it won't start a party or spread any big ideas, but that feeling of hope lingers, and can rub off on the listener. (JM)

**Saddle Creek, PO Box 8554, Omaha, NE 68108-0554, saddle-creek.com**

### Oneida – Happy New Year, CD

Genres merrily collide on this eclectic and carefully crafted 11-song disc, which marks the 100th release for Bloomington's Jagjaguwar label. Melancholy jaunts bleed into electronic cut-ups. Frequent dancehall exercises rub elbows with dissonant pseudo-acoustic ballads. Poppy bridges lead listeners toward a closing requiem fleshed out with spare keyboard/piano motifs and horror-house interjections. Simply put, it's exactly what you'd expect from these Brooklyn vets, who shine brightest



when the sometimes-mutated forms they adopt as their own are predictably unpredictable. There are threads running through the disc, of course, but the group's latest full-length may be better experienced as a sequence of disjointed moments, each lovingly composed and welcoming in its defiance of expectations. (JV)

Jagjaguwar/Brah, 1499 W. Second St., Bloomington, IN 47403, jagjaguwar.com

#### Pan for Punks – A Steelpan Tribute to the Ramones, CD

What the fuck? I have heard a lot in my years in the world of Ramones tributes. This one takes the cake. All girl bands doing Ramones covers? Yawn! Ramones covers done in multiple languages? Puh-lease. Have you heard the all orchestral versions of your favorite Ramones songs? Pfft. Wait, stop and listen to this one. Tracy is a one-man band of drums, bass, and a set of steel drums. His steel drum work is incredible, and he leaves in the counts and “hey-ho’s” to keep it feeling more like Johnny, Tommy, Joey, and Dee Dee. I would absolutely recommend this to all fans of the Ramones. I do have a major gripe with this CD, though. The drums and bass take away from the steel drums. Tracy’s ability is incredible and it should shine on its own. The DVD video included is worth the price alone to see how the magic is done on the steel. Fun stuff, and a nice surprise is this mundane, bland world of punk. (EA)

Self-released, panforpunks.com

#### Parks, Cale – Illuminated Manuscript, CD

Aloha’s Cale Parks has crafted a rather difficult, but often rewarding, solo record. Almost a completely instrumental release, the tracks build on loops that reach a hypnotic level. Sometimes this is good, but by the end of the record, you might be saying uncle. Aloha has always been an adventurous band with post-hardcore, post-rock, and AM pop leanings, but the songs are always the key. With Parks experimenting around the room with all sorts of instruments and studio toys, the key sometimes feels like it’s lost in the pile. (EG)

Polyvinyl, polyvinylrecords.com

#### Peaches – Impeach My Bush, CD

“Fuck Bush” and “fuck me” aren’t exactly revolutionary concepts for a 2006 protest album. So it was doubly brave for Peaches, the raunchy queen of electroclash, to use both on her third album, *Impeach My Bush*. It would have been easy to descend into knee-jerk anger and sex for sex’s sake (both formulas that have their place, if only everyone else wasn’t using ‘em, too), but Peaches does neither. *Impeach My Bush* is indeed angry and sexy, but it’s also lyrically smart (“Slippery dick / it’s just a fish in the Atlantic”) and opinionated, as opposed to judgmental. (That last is a tricky one, and few do it as well as Peaches does.) Above all, it’s completely rad to be able to (read: want to) dance to an album that’s not only constructively angry at the current administration, but anti-heteronormativity, too. And you’ll want to grind, because this is no hollow bedroom electroclash—it’s rich and rocking, and includes collaborations with Beth Ditto, Joan Jett, Samantha Maloney (Hole), Josh Homme, and Leslie Feist. Peaches has

upped her own ante, too. Her first two records were largely MC505 affairs, but *Impeach* features Moogs, 808’s, guitar, and live drums. Listen long enough, and you just might be ready to fight back in ‘08. (MC)

XL, xirecordings.com

#### Polar Bear Club – The Redder the Better, CDEP

I don’t think I ever got sick of mid-’90s emotional hardcore, and Polar Bear Club have managed to combine all my favorite bands from that time to create this emotionally charged five-song EP like it was still ‘96. With powerful guitar melodies, poppy chord progressions, and vocals that sound uncannily like the guy from Hot Water Music, I can imagine these guys might have had a large following 10 or so years ago. The songs here are poppy, but still retain a certain amount of punk-like aggression (another nod to Hot Water Music), but there are a couple of twinkly guitar lines that recall some of your favorite Midwest emo bands: during one song I was reminded of early Promise Ring and, when the next song came up, I thought of Braid. If you’re one of the few people who didn’t get rid of your entire Jade Tree collection when you got to college, I highly suggest checking out this EP. It’s excellently written and could have come from your high school record collection. (KM)

Triple Attack, 610 Brooks Rd, West Henrietta, NY 14586, tripleattack.com

Luchador, 32 Ivy Cottage Lane, Rochester, NY 14623, luchadorrecords.com

#### Polkaholics, the – Polka Über Alles, CD

With a name like Grayewski, a girl’s got to know a thing about polka. Excitedly, I put on *Polka Über Alles* with hopes for a balance between the polkas my mom spins on the weekends and something that might interest young blood in the traditionally geriatric genre. While lyrics have never been polka’s forte (e.g. the classic “I don’t want her / you can have her / she’s too fat for me”), the Polkaholics hit a new chicks-and-beer obsessed low and don’t necessarily change much for the better (although theirs goes “I don’t want her / you can have her / she’s too smart for me”). The glam-metal polka “Sauerkraut is Sweet” is easily the most egregious offense and biggest mistake. But, admittedly, this is all shtick, and the polka is for happy times, so how could a Polack disapprove? (KG)

Self-released, PO Box 803664, Chicago, IL 60680, thepolkaholics.com

#### Protestant – Make Peace With the Rope You Hang From, LP

Before I even get to the music on this record, I have to give props to Protestant for assembling such a nice looking record. The cover art is amazing, and the tri-colored vinyl is a nice touch. (Yeah, I’m a record collector geek. Deal with it.) Protestant leaves me scratching my head as far as comparisons go. They combine tech, metal, sludge, and grind, but not in the ways that it’s typically done. I could see this appealing to fans of Tragedy or From Ashes Rise, but musically, Protestant is much more diverse and makes those bands look kind of silly. At first, *Make Peace With the Rope You Hang From* didn’t hit me very hard, but after examining the lyric sheet, I realized the record is mislabeled and I was listening to the second side. Once heard in the correct context, I

Both of the bands are two of the more creative things going within the screamo genre these days. Catalyst bring a little grunge influence to their screamy, post-hardcore leanings. The songs definitely recall early Sub Pop records (they got the guitars down pat), and when the singer of the band is screaming just right I swear it sounds like Kurt Cobain. Listening to their tracks brought me back to a time when people still bought Mudhoney records. They also have the best song title I’ve heard this year with “Smoke Crack Worship Satan.” Like Catalyst, Mass Moth also have a different take on traditional hardcore/screamo sound with their addition of “creepy circus” keyboards, new-wavey, danceable beats, and an interesting dub/ska influence. With each record, these guys have been constantly improving their sound. The guitar melodies have gotten more complex, the keyboards help to complement the music more, and the bass lines (without a doubt my favorite part) are just breathtakingly awesome in the groove department. It’s inspiring to hear a ska/dub part in a band like this because it seems like so many others just follow a path that’s already been treaded many times before. The vocals on their songs range from screams to spoken parts drenched in an underwater effects—yet another unique attribute that I can’t be more excited about. With people constantly complaining about how stale the hardcore scene is, I’d have to recommend these two new Virginia bands that aren’t afraid to mix things up a bit. This CD is a perfect introduction, and any screamy hardcore fan should pick it up, especially those who complain about every band sounding the same. My only complaint is the track listing doesn’t specify who’s playing what song, and might confuse those who aren’t already familiar with at least one of the bands. (KM)

Perpetual Motion Machine, PO Box 657, Hamilton, VA 20159, theperpetualmotionmachine.com

Electric Human Project, 500 South Union St., Wilmington, DE 19805, electrichumanproject.com



#### Mika Miko – Cyslab, CD

This one was already a staple of my stereo for a couple of months before I got it for review. When I first found out about this album I tried to think back to the Mika Miko 7” that I reviewed for *Punk Planet* a while back. I knew it was good, but that’s all I could remember. Upon further investigation and re-listening, it was really good... but only really good. Not great, like this record. The 7” was easy to lump into the Riot-Girl style. They’ve done a good job of expanding their sound in the time since the 7”. The Riot-Girl sound is still there in minute traces. They mix it together with

heavy doses of early SoCal punk influences (Black Flag/Redd Kross) mixed with British post-punk (Delta 5). The opening chords of “Take it Serious” gave me the same feeling as when I first heard the opening chords of Black Flag’s *Nervous Breakdown* EP. The distorted chords immediately burrow into your brain and force you to listen. “Capricorinations” follows it up, providing a nice contrast with its dancey beat. “Take Hold” reminds me of Redd Kross circa 1981 jamming out on “Standing in Front of Poseur” with Delta 5 as a backing band. “Business Cats” reminds me of the Pop Group if they had actually written a rocking song. “Oh, Head Spin!” ends the album with a rocking/surfy feel. Clocking in at 20:57, there’s no room for crap. The fat and filler was trimmed off and just the best, most rocking parts were included. It’s great to see that Mika Miko has fully grasped the concept of album writing at such an early stage of their musical existence. Hopefully they don’t go the route of a lot of their influences and degenerate into a bad disco band. Buy this album. Go to their shows. Support this band, because they are amazing. (DA)

Kill Rock Stars, PO Box 418, 120 State Ave. NE, Olympia, WA 98501, killrockstars.com



#### Retching Red – Scarlet Whore of War, CD

Just over a year since Retching Red shocked the shit out of the underground with *Get Your Red Wings*, they’re back with a second full length. Tilt fans won’t believe that Cinder Block has this much rage in her, but she’s just as good at screaming in Retching Red as she was at her famous melodic singing in Tilt. Cyco Loco of Oppressed Logic still kicks ass as well, and Retching Red definitely sounds more like Oppressed Logic than Tilt. Retching Red isn’t catching on as quickly as they should be, at least not outside of California. Their two nationwide tours resulted in shows

ranging from huge to barren, which is not a good sign of these arguably dwindling punk times. I think the problem is that kids into hardcore are reluctant to go see a band fronted by a pop-punk legend, but they’re missing out on one of today’s very best bands. Songs such as “Blue Kid Trapped in a Red State,” “Stop Breeding,” and “Lying Sacks of Shit” are instant classics, rivaling any of the material of Retching Red’s members’ former bands. The lyrics are haunting and clever, as on “Leviathan,” in which Cinder Block tackles Hurricane Katrina conspiracy theories. Even on more straightforward tracks such as “Unmarketable” and “Smoke Yourself Sick,” Retching Red manages to take familiar punk subject matter and create songs that are oddly original. Retching Red will never see the success that Tilt did, but the underground should give Retching Red a listen before the band disappears into the great punk abyss. My only hesitation with this album is that it isn’t available on vinyl as of yet. Someone needs to put out both of Retching Red’s full lengths as LP’s. Who knows? Maybe they’d get more respect in the underground with vinyl in the mix. (AE)

Rodent Popsicle, PO Box 1143, Allston, MA, rodentpopsicle.com



## REVIEWER SPOTLIGHTS

Sold back to the US in the form of drove upon drove of bands from all over the globe and still alive in countless bands today (god only knows what Japanese thrash would sound like today if Septic Death had never happened); it's truly a sad fact that the band's back catalog has been in and out of print for nearly 20 years.

**I've made a huge mistake:** Negative Approach, Live at Touch and Go Records 25th Anniversary Block Party; V/A, *The Complete Motown Singles Vol. 1 (1959-1961)*; Xasthur, *Subliminal Genocide*; the Fix, *At the Speed of Twisted Thought*; Mastodon, *Blood Mountain*.



### Reviewer Spotlight: Justin Marciniak (JM)

**Talking Heads, *Remain in Light*.** Shouldn't this album sound dated by now? Def Leppard records sound like tapered acid-washed jeans. The production of a lot of late-'80s hip hop won't help anyone get drunk. Flannel shirts lasted longer than some popular grunge of the mid-'90s. *Remain in Light*, on the other hand, is an album of polyrhythmic post-funk performed by a cerebral new wave band. Yet Talking Heads' fourth record, released in 1980, probably will always sound modern. OK, maybe the very Van Halen lead guitar at the end of third track, "The Great Curve," sounds like it still belongs in 1980. The next song, at least in theory, should sound as retro as the selections on '80s hits compilations advertised on infomercials. To this day, though, "Once in a Lifetime" sounds otherworldly and ahead of its time. "Same as it ever was," indeed. That classic ends side A, the LP's funkier side, and where David Byrne's interest in world music, Tina Weymouth and Chris Frantz's incredibly credible funk chops, Jerry Harrison's versatile keyboards, and Brian Eno's ambition and brilliant organization collide. The frantic rhythms and layered details are appropriate partners for Byrne's twitchy, paranoid lyrics about identity and global intrigue on an introspective level. And *Remain in Light* serves listeners who want to tumble and tangle their limbs on the dance floor or contemplate and unravel Byrne's lyrics. The record is universal and timeless—a critic's way of calling something excellent.

**Dinner and dishes music:** Sonic Youth, Sister; Pixies, *Doolittle*; the Fiery Furnaces, *Bitter Tea*; My Bloody Valentine, *Isn't Anything*; the M's, *S/T*.

### Reviewer Spotlight: Krystle Miller (KM)

**Case, Neko, *Blacklisted*.** I'll admit I stayed away from Neko Case's music for too long because as a teenager in the South, I grew up hating most of the people who listened to it. Years later, my hatred died down, and I found this CD in the used bin of a record store. I'd been hearing how great Neko was for a long time and decided to pick it up on a whim. Looking back on the way I used to feel about country, it's funny this is one of my favorite albums. Somewhere deep in my brain, the teenage me cringes. However, I now know that comparing Neko to popular country music is like comparing Reign in Blood-era Slayer to whatever album Metallica last put out; they can both be called metal, but they're completely different styles. Unlike a lot of new country, Neko's sound is firmly rooted in the golden age of country (think Patsy Cline or Loretta Lynn) and completely lacks the plastic, pop-rock shine of popular country. If any of the first country artists were alive today I'm sure that they would be more of a Neko Case fan than whatever's currently playing on CMT, as Neko's songs embody a sort of eerie darkness and working class sadness that much of those old songs had. If that hasn't convinced some of *Punk Planet*'s fierce genre-ists, consider this: a video off her first album was prohibited from playing on CMT because it was "too dark"; she has rejected major label offers—opting instead to stay on indie labels; and rumor has it, she was banned from the Grand Ole Opry after playing there a few years ago.

**Current musics:** The Big Sleep, *Son of the Tiger*; Psychic Ills, *Dins*; The Vaselines, *A Complete History*; Sonic Youth, Sister; Dead Meadow, *S/T*.



### Reviewer Spotlight: Steve Mizek (SRM)

**High Rise, *Live*.** Japanese band High Rise unleashed their first overdriven assault in 1986, *High Rise II*, which started forest fires with incinerating solos and knocked down doors with a battering ram rhythm section. Their psychedelic worship was tempered by a devotion to thrashed out punk rock, as if laying a branding iron on the ass of the Ramones' early releases. Eight years and one album later, High Rise recorded what would become their defining moment. Since their debut, the band focused progressively less on punking out and more on the fiery psychedelia of Blue Cheer and '60s homeland heroes, Les Rallizes Dénudés. *Live* captures the spirited trio at their rawest and most comfortable. Listeners might as well be inches away from dilapidating stacks of amplifiers pushing hellacious riffs. Guitarist Munehiro Niritto dominates tunes with mangled and seemingly endless leads. Though the vocals and bass work of Asahito Nanjo are intentionally buried in the mix, his walking melodic pulses and calmly intoned vocals pop through the fuzz just enough to be a presence. High Rise paints the aural canvas with the widest, funkiest brush in the toolbox—swaths of bristling feedback riffs. *Live* doesn't offer listeners much breathing room with pyroclastic versions of "Ikon," "Mira," and "Mainliner" (except for the eight-and-a-half minute fuzz boogie jam, "Door"), but it's one of the finest ways to drown in sound.

**Five other records going round:** Neil Young, *After the Gold Rush*; DJ Drama & Li'l Wayne, *Dedication Vol. 2*; Thin Lizzy, *Jailbreak*; V/A, *Pop Ambient 2006*; Thee Headcoats, *Beached Earls*.

got a feel for the record, and it really blew me away. "Fuck Me Eyes" begins with a drawn-out intro that suggests emerging from a bomb shelter, post-nuclear war. The whole album carries on in that same atmospheric, vision-inducing way. It's one of those albums that is so cohesive, you have to take it as a whole. It definitely blows away their split with Rhino Charge. (DA)  
930 E. Brady St., Milwaukee, WI 53206, [myspace.com/protantmilwaukee](http://myspace.com/protantmilwaukee)

### Rose, Ethan – *Ceiling Songs*, CD

At first glance, *Ceiling Songs*, the third album from Portland's Ethan Rose, seems overly precious: silvery gray cover, flowery name, and a trio of songs called "One," "Two," and "Three." Honestly, it sat on my desk for a while. But when I listened at last, I felt stupid for not doing so long, long before. Rose created *Ceiling Songs* by removing notes from an old-school "Happy Birthday" player piano roll and a "Jingle Bells" music box, then adding strings, brass, percussion, and a smidgen of electronics. You hear everything from scratch on paper to fingers on keys. The result is gentle without being passive, warm but never oatmeal-boring. It lands somewhere between *musique concrete* and drone, and it's arguably the freshest thing you'll hear this year. (MC)  
Locust, PO Box 220426, Chicago, IL 60622, [locustmusic.com](http://locustmusic.com)

### Rux, Carl Hancock Rux – *Good Bread Alley*, CD

You couldn't find Robert Randolph and the Family Band or Solomon Burke playing a shitty, hole-in-the-wall blues club, and that's a shame. It's probably the best place for them and where their music would be greatly appreciated. But that's exactly where you could (and would) find Carl Hancock Rux playing the contents of this contribution to Thirsty Ear's "Blue Series," with a lean and smoking backing ensemble. He cooks gospel and blues into a little storm steeped with a more morose, bottom-of-the-ocean deep voice than Randolph's, but one that carries with it a wealth. As silly as it sounds, it wouldn't be surprising to someday hear that Andre 3000 or Kanye want to collaborate with Rux and his soulful ways. (SM)  
Self-released, [carlhancroxx.com](http://carlhancroxx.com)

### Sadies, the – *Tales of the Rat Fink*, CD

The Sadies are, without a doubt, my favorite current non-heavy band. It's total bullshit that more people don't know about this group. Especially with all the garbage that gets so much attention, not only in the mainstream media, but in the underground as well. If you don't own a copy of their 2004 release, *Favourite Colours*, you need to head on over to your favorite record store and buy it ASAP. Or just hit up the Yep Roc Records web store and order yourself a copy. Then go get this new one, which is apparently the soundtrack to this movie called *Tales of the Rat Fink* that's all about Kustom car hero Ed "Big Daddy" Roth. I've never heard of the guy, but I'm going to try to track down this flick just to see the images that link up to these short instrumental bullets the Sadies have fired off. The 26 cuts presented here run the gamut of the Sadies' musical styles: psychedelic garage rock, chicken-pickin' honky tonk, spaghetti western rip-offs, and reverb-drenched rockabilly. The band has always been heavy on instrumentals,

with the exception of their last record, so they made up for it with this release. If you ever have an occasion to hear this band's music, don't pass it up. The Sadies rock. (AJ)  
Yep Roc, PO Box 4821 Chapel Hill, NC 27515, [yeproc.com](http://yeproc.com)

### Selmanaires, the – *Here Come the Selmanaires*, CD

*Here Come the Selmanaires* was a pleasant surprise in my review bundle this month. This CD has a lot going on in terms of musical styles, combing surf rock, garage rock, and rock 'n' roll music into one smooth and enjoyable disc. It's a common mistake of most bands that venture into multi-genre blending to end up with a finished product that is jerky and disoriented. The Selmanaires understand the importance of juxtaposition, and therefore avoided sounding like a messy weird jumble of unrelated songs; they've also created a solid, catchy, and upbeat album. I wouldn't be surprised to see more of this band lurking around at festivals or on college radio in the future. (JB)  
Simeon Walunas, [internationalhits.com](http://internationalhits.com)

### Sleepy Eyes of Death – *S/T*, CDEP

When M83 released *Dead Cities, Red Seas & Lost Ghosts* in 2003, bunches of people went flippy for shoegaze again and gave the genre another go. Now three years later, the lazily-named Sleepy Eyes of Death (SED) have released an EP totally ignorant of the origins of shoegaze and an unhealthy fixation on the M83 sound. Without so much as changing up the synthesizer tones or adding a new instrument, SED plod through four tunes sorely lacking ambition, fresh ideas, and M83's songwriting chops. The vintage synths are weakly milked for slightly tense moods in front of a monochromatic guitar backdrop. The group's one-piece rhythm section is often negligently sparse; they might as well have used a metronome in place of a drum machine. And only during the hidden last track does this unflagging formula waver for some cavernous washes of sound. Instead of settling for the dollar-store version of shoegaze revival, pick up the aforementioned *Dead Cities* and cut out the middleman. (SRM)  
Self-released, PO Box 31464, Seattle, WA 98103, [sleepyeyesofdeath.com](http://sleepyeyesofdeath.com)

### Spy-machine Sixteen – *The Soap From This Soapbox Makes My Dirty Feet Slide*, EP

The lyrics to this four-song EP come in the shape of a hound dog's head. It's not origami, but it's cute enough that it doesn't matter. Kind of how people should approach this music. This isn't really dance music, not really straight-up power pop, not punk, and not as political as it tries to make itself out to be, but it's cute. Maybe the sludgy recordings prod me to not take this more seriously than any other demo I've ever been handed by friends who think they've got something hot going on in the basement. But there is something here that silently instructs you not to turn it off. It's probably the promise that someday this band will get into a real studio and do these songs—with outstanding keyboard lines flying through almost every second—justice. Spy-machine Sixteen has a two-person dance squad, and Dave Hudson writes some melodies and lyrics that are keepers (for the most part). The trouble here lies in the production that makes this sound like hearing a mix of



Ninja High School and Tilly and the Wall through a thin apartment wall. (SM)

Myspace.com/spymachinel6

### Sea, Like Lead, the – S/T, CDEP

There's not much here in terms of volume—three mostly instrumental songs and a pair of 40-odd second interludes—but this unassuming EP may be one of the better debuts you'll find this year. The Pittsburgh-based trio, like June of 44 and A Minor Forest before it, knows the value of well-timed silences and their sometimes-glassy, sometimes-erupting brand of post-rock shows a surprisingly intuitive ability to navigate the deceptive passages between quiet and loud refrains. The fact that the record's three core songs, all meandering guitars and somber bridges, were captured on audio tape for a demo should only heighten listeners' excitement about what's waiting around the corner. If this disc, with its Joe McCarthy samples and "Memory is a map" declarations, is any indication, it's not to be missed. (JV)

Hope, PO Box 71154, Pittsburgh, PA 15213, hoperecords.com

### Set Your Goals – Mutiny, CD

Set Your Goals (perhaps named after the CIV debut?) is what I'd imagine Fall Out Boy to sound like: the diluted generation of melodic hardcore contrived out of the Gorilla Biscuits to Lifetime to Saves the Day lineage. The sound's popularity proves that it's not going to stop anytime soon, and will definitely wear out its welcome. This Bay Area outfit play epic pop given a commercial punk appeal and a slight flavor of hardcore's aggressive edge, clearly marketed towards the Fuse and Alternative Press crowd. And there are no qualms about it, as demonstrated in songs like "We Do It for the Money, Obviously!" While there's a couple of sweet '80s-style breakdowns and mic pile-up moments, they're always followed up by saccharine so sick, I'd rather swallow a million packets of Splenda and then vomit all over my Side by Side records. (VC)

Eulogy, eulogyrecords.com

### Superhopper – Party Killers, CDEP

This is poppy rock with a lot of sugar, but not too much. The songs on *Party Killers* are charged and driving, but they aren't snotty punk or power pop. In fact, Superhopper walks a fine line between those extremes. The music doesn't veer too off course from a formula, but the formula isn't bothersome. Vocalist Kermit Carter reminds me of Robert Pollard's faux-British voice at times. Overall, this is feel-good guitar rock that doesn't flake out on you. (EG)

Guilt Ridden Pop, PO Box 11894, St. Paul, MN 55111, guilttridentpop.com

### Tanakh – Ardent Fevers, CD

The intentionally romanticized beauty of a song tied to a certain time of day is always an inherently self-aware thing, an endeavor to bring about memories of how that particular hour felt and an attempt to transport oneself back to it somehow. Such is the case on "5 a.m.," the second track of *Ardent Fevers*, Tanakh's fourth release for Alien8 Recordings. While the main voice behind the group is one Jesse Poe, the liner notes prove the existence of no less than a dozen co-conspirators on a host of instruments

that help flesh out the space between every sound. It doesn't matter so much which tracks in particular they play on—whether two or all eleven—as each track is such a quiet space, a combination of sounds that does not intend to draw attention to itself but rather to the composition as a whole. This is a collection of well-constructed, melodic folk-pop with orchestrated moments: understated, layered, and ethereal at times, meant for late evenings and reflection. A continual snare drum pitter-patters along without much pomp, followed by a slow, low slap bass; the lyrics aren't stellar but simple, and they find their way among plucked acoustic guitars and horn ensembles that somehow manage to complement each other. "Still Trying to Find You Home" is a huge standout, floating along in the style of Leonard Cohen until it builds into an ultimately elegant plateau. Although the majority of this album leaves Tanakh in the grey territory of pleasantness—balancing between earnest quietude and unintentional dullness. When they shine, they do so in such a lovely, fragile way. (SBM)

Alien8 Recordings, No contact info provided

### Terror Bute – Return to the Astro Castle, CD

Keytars, Moogs, and three boys who look like they're 15 in matching white jumpsuits translates into one giant boner for this lady right here. Terror Bute plays super upbeat, energetic, party-friendly, new-wave punk music. Sassy laser beam noises, catchy drum-beat lines, and lyrics that really don't make much sense (but make mention of quality things such as chatting online, dancing, and "pressing buttons in a room full of buttons") is what can be expected from *Return to the Astro Castle*. This saucy threesome did an awesome job on their first release with Vicious Pop Records, and should continue to do great things in the future. Like play a show at my house. (JB)

Vicious Pop, 4023 N. Bartlett Ave. Shorewood, WI 53211, viciouspoprecords.com

### Thee More Shallows – Monkey Vs. Shark, CDEP

Here unearthed noises, a fragile voice, and gracefully chaotic music are woven into something so organic and satisfying you'll wonder how your ears have yet to hear these sounds blended together before. This EP combines pieces—a record skip, violin scrawl, robotic chatter—and live-band accompaniment to craft a meaningful, personal muddle; bagpipe blips take me to the Highlands, intimate Ben Gibbard-like vocals drive me on a nighttime car ride home, and clanks of pots plunk me in a collapsing kitchenette. It's confusing and lovely stuff. With this set of seven songs, Thee More Shallows have made music out of the oxymoronic: delicate vigor, complicated ease, a disturbingly impassive rendition of an Al Green classic ("I Can't Get Next to You"). This very good EP, including a remix by Odd Nodsam and Why?, sounds even better after subsequent listens expose new snippets and the sweeping, underlying melodies take off. (KG)

Turn, P.O. Box 784, Santa Clara, CA 95052, turnrecords.com

### Thee Moths – Nature, CD

This spare, bleak record defines itself not through somber acoustic ruminations or Alex Botten's breathy whisper of a voice, but in how those elements are cut up and filtered through Botten's



### Xiu Xiu – The Air Force, CD

Are you kidding me? Another Xiu Xiu record? Jamie Stewart has to be one of the most hated musicians, because he spits out new records left and right and every one is a success. Xiu Xiu is like some horrible drug. With each record, I vow to give them up, telling myself I'm tired of their pseudo-pretentious depression. Sometimes, I even become clean for months, not listening to a quivered note that Stewart sings—but then, a new form of Xiu Xiu comes out. This time the new form is *The Air Force*, and I don't hesitate

to say that I think it may very well be the best Xiu Xiu record to date. It's definitely the most listenable, from the first notes of the piano on "Buzz Saw" to the monologue and double bass of "Wig Master" (which actually is overdoing it on the pretentious scale a little bit). Again, Stewart doesn't stray from his sexually frustrated, gravely depressing nightmarish anthems that he so enjoys writing. On *The Air Force*, Jamie strikes gold with three songs in particular. "Bishop, CA" starts with a very mellow synth line and erupts into a wall of beautiful noise that abruptly ends, leading into my favorite part on the record. This 20-second interlude features Jamie and Caralee singing "walla walla walla walla hey" over and over—almost too beautiful for a Xiu Xiu track. "The Pineapple vs. the Watermelon" and "The Fox & the Rabbit" are two standout tracks as well, with subdued vocals and a more almost "commercially-friendly" take on Xiu Xiu. Well... as commercially friendly as songs about suicide with Jamie Stewart singing can be. I don't recall Caralee singing as much on the other records, and the combination of their voices provides an added touch of beauty. *The Air Force* is not a record to put on when you're trying to sleep, trying to have a conversation, or trying to work. It steals your focus, and I'm sure if you're crying, the record will make you cry harder. Once again, Xiu Xiu has won my approval, proving yet again that I can't stay clean of their wonderful despair. (MB)

5 Rue Christine, PO Box 1190, Olympia, WA 98501, Src.com



### Various Artists – Rogue's Gallery, CD

I'm sure a pirate's life is not for me, and until recently, I didn't think their music (or the music of seafaring people in general) would be either. *Rogue's Gallery* is a two-disc collection of "pirate ballads, sea songs, and chanteys" meant as a tie-in for the new *Pirates of the Caribbean* flick. Assembled by *Pirates* director Gore Verbinski and the still-pretty Johnny Depp, the anthology brings together a host of unlikely musicians to give their takes on maritime classics.

And oftentimes it's the artists you wouldn't associate with swashbuckling who provide the most interesting renditions: Roxy Music's Bryan Ferry lays out a haunting soundscape with "The Cruel Captain's Ship," rife with dark piano melodies, scraping violin, and Ferry's perfectly rusty pipes. Loudon Wainwright III's bittersweet "Turkish Revelry" recounts a cabin boy's attempts at being a murderous pirate; his son Rufus appears on the comp as well in a wistful duet with Kate McGarrigle. The less traditional versions, like Joseph Arthur's creepshow "Coast of High Barbary," Robin Holcomb's schizoid jazz interpretation of "Dead Horse," and Jarvis Cocker's feedback-drenched barn burner, "A Drop of Nelson's Blood," break up the sometimes monotonous collection. My favorite moments of *Rogue's Gallery* come on disc two, in the form of White Magic's drifting drone tune "Long Time Ago," Akron/Family's gentle, yet scornful ballad "One Spring Morning," and old Lou Reed's water-logged street-poet take on "Leave Her Johnny." There are contributions by Bono and Sting, Nick Cave and Lucinda Williams, Van Dyke Parks and Ed Harcourt as well, though most are not as noteworthy as the ones described above. Though this collection would have had greater impact as a single disc, *Rogue's Gallery* is a must for fans of folk music or the styles played by most of the musicians present. These classic tunes laid the groundwork for a significant portion of the folk music we've come to love. And to hear them given faithful, modern treatment is a tribute to their timelessness. (SRM)

Anti, 2798 Sunset Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90026, anti.com

prominently featured laptop. A painted homage to the machine, one's led to believe, is even featured on the cover. The result is hit or miss and, sadly, more often the latter. Tracks like "Shallow Blue Ocean" or "Do Not Be Ashamed," for all their dead space or forced found sounds, are genuinely beautiful. But do we really need to find them after wandering through a landscape so cluttered with digital glitches and stitch-weary segues that one must wonder if their CD player's on the frit? (JV)

Banazan, PO Box 2312, Orange, CA 92689, banazan.com

### Titles – S/T, CD

Many of the stories on the eponymous debut record—by this band from inconspicuous little Con-

necticut—are stuffed with ulterior motives and entendres, the non-bashful insinuations of actions replacing words and actions not meshing with words. In most cases, lead singer Brad Amoroso seems to suggest that each interaction with another is an experiment or in an experimental stage, being acted upon by someone unseen. There's even a song entitled "Lab Rat," a look at dysfunction in a new way. The music is mostly of the come-lately variety, but years behind emo rock 'n' roll that still works in the right ways to move these night tremors along enough that they'll never be confused for sweet nothings. (SM)

Self-released, listen2titles.com



## REVIEWER SPOTLIGHTS

### Reviewer spotlight: Sean Moeller (SM)

**Dr. Frank, *Show Business Is My Life*.** Writing "Catcher in the Rye"—ish literature for the young adult set is how Dr. Frank now makes his living, but this solo effort proves that if there's a schizophrenic woman to be found or a deluded tale of wacky, romantic infatuation to be told, it's the good doctor who will do it, not you good sir (or madam). For all of his prolificacy, by way of the two-decade spanning Mr. T Experience (one of the best band names to give absolutely no insight into what the music might sound like), *Show Business Is My Life* was another drop in the bucket—and by that I don't mean it was a waste. He's got a way of writing about the crazies that halfway explains why love is the ultimate motherfucker. It's because when it finds you, no one's acting rationally and when it turns out that one of those affected happens to really be loco, that's when it gets interesting. It's what every movie premise about love banks on—that lunacy that causes people to dive in headfirst—and Dr. Frank writes about this better than anyone when he sings, "She turned out to be crazy / I turned out to be screwed." This album serves as a reminder that we're the sane ones.

**Current occupations:** M. Ward, Post–War, Annuals, Be He Me; Andrew WK, The Wolf; TV on the Radio, Return to Cookie Mountain; Christine Fellows, Paper Anniversary.

### Reviewer Spotlight – Sarah Moody (SBM)

**Godspeed You! Black Emperor, *F# A# [infinity]*.** Aside from the limited, 33-edition tape that came out in '94 (anyone have a copy?), this is the album that started it all—packaged with the now familiar meticulous liner notes courtesy of Efrim, full of drawings and articulate schematics, blurry photos, and short manifestos. Though the number of tracks here is small (three total), each composition is over 16 minutes long and performed by no fewer than nine musicians. *F# A# [infinity]* is both political and personal without being preachy, and offers hope amid post-everything emptiness (and this was in '98!). The shouted street recording of "East Hastings" melds into an eerie, leisurely repeating guitar line that slowly builds, repeats, and modifies itself slightly as it creeps along each time until suddenly the composition is overtaken by an explosive barrage of churning violins. "Dead Flag Blues" is a triumph in four parts, opening the album with a bleak monologue that leads into a train, harmonics, and a strangely calm outro. *Infinity* is both sinister and celebratory throughout as it heaves and pulls back, twisting beneath the echoes in the most devious ways. The trains, the darkness, the shifts in melody and mood, the everything—it's all here. I can recall blasting it while lying on the floor at 3 a.m., stuck on repeat and finally getting it. This album has proven to be a continual epiphany ever since and is absolutely essential for so many reasons.

**They watered down / the poison in this town:** Malachi Constant, *Pride*; Múm, *Finally We Are No One*; Houd, *Cold House*; Loscil, *Plume*; lots of Anticon & too many old mix CDs.

### Reviewer Spotlight: Scott Morrow (SJM)

**Gravediggaz, *6 Feet Deep*.** Horrorcore shall never die! Wait . . . what? I guess it died a long time ago. Well, I do know this much: Gravediggaz' *6 Feet Deep* was its finest hour (er, 50 minutes). Mixing head-banging beats with horror-inspired lyrics, RZA and Prince Paul helped produce the group's only first-rate album. The material wasn't self-important, and better still, it was funny. See the "360 Questions (to Ask a Gravediggaz)" skit for proof: "Yo, RZA. How many bites did it take you to chew your fuckin' arm off?" The album is a concoction of moody samples, bass hits, and personality, but with enough absurdity to prevent the formula from going stale. Its finest cut, "1-800-Suicide," may not have charted as well as the courtroom tale "Diary of a Mad-man," but it brought the figurative lumber for gory imagery: "The first was convinced / stuck a water hose in his mouth at full blast so his head can explode / Second one said, 'Hmm, that's good, but I can top it.' / Put an axe up to his head and then he chopped it." That's gold, Jerry! It's too bad that Prince Paul and RZA bailed on this whole horror thing. Think of the potential for zombie movie soundtracks!

**Ridin' the caboose to hell—bzzzt!—touch the third rail:** Estradasphere, *Palace of Mirrors*; London Sinfonietta, *Warp Works & Twentieth Century Masters*; The Mars Volta, *Amputechture*; Red Sparowes, *Every Red Heart Shines Toward the Red Sun*; Venetian Snares, *Cavalcade of Glee and Dadaist Happy Hardcore Pom Poms*.

### Reviewer Spotlight: Brian Moss (BM)

**Samiam, *Billy*.** Spanning the length of over a decade and a half, Samiam formed in the Bay Area during the regions late-'80s underground glory days, played contributor and victim to the major label pop-punk explosion of the mid-'90s, and stuck around well after the feeding frenzy had subsided. Partially adhering to the West Coast board sports-punk sound, the quartet introduced elements of raw aggression, poetic critique, and lengthy dynamic complexity, assembling a sound that, at the time, was relatively unheard of. Over the years, Samiam's lineup, often incestuous to their native scene, came and went through a revolving door. As the cast shifted, so did their music: what began as something gritty and inventive turned to more polished and tamed pop foundations (most likely attributable to the band's short lived contract with Atlantic Records and/or hopes of broadening their fan base). Finally, this year, after a lengthy release hiatus, Samiam returned to some extent—with refined and expanded abilities—to punk rooting. *Billy*, released in 1992 on New Red Archives (NRA), is one of Samiam's finest albums as their pop tendencies, raucous animosity, and genre defying splices are all equally present.

**Grade-A cuts:** Supersystem, *Always Never Again*; TornaValanche, *No Money No Problems*; Mississippi John Hurt, *Avalon Blues*; The Velvet Teen, *Cum Laude*; Nancy Sinatra and Lee Hazlewood, *You Go Go Girl*.

### Reviewer's Spotlight: Bart Niedzialkowski (BN)

Cardigans, the, *Gran Turismo*. So I'm looking through some of my CDs last night to write about in this section, and

I come across the Cardigans' *Gran Turismo*. As soon as I pick it up my mind fills up with doubt: "Do I really want to write about this in my spotlight?" Fuck it, we've all got guilty pleasures! *Gran Turismo* was an interesting record in that it was the first album since the huge success the sugary-pop "Lovefool" brought the band. Realizing the danger of being forever tied to the bubblegum-pop sound, the Cardigans put together a dark, moody, and experimental title. Delving into electronica, distortion, and sorrowful crooning, the band shied away from the pop sound that accounted for their biggest hit to date, and embraced, of all things, trip hop. The end result is indeed trippy, with the drums, guitars, and keyboards driving the effectively simple melodies, and Nina Persson's sleepy vocals lulling you before sudden bursts of distortion and electronic effects jar your senses. This proves especially effective on "Do You Believe," during which a resigned Persson softly declares "Do you really think that love is gonna save the world? / Well, I don't think so," effectively distancing herself from the sunny-warm songs she was so used to writing. It's a theme that continues through the record, including my personal favorites "Paralyzed" and "Erase/Rewind," and makes *Gran Turismo* such a pleasure, guilty or not.

**Now Playing:** Rancid, Let's Go; V/A, *Anti-Disco League*; Swingin' Utters, *The Streets of San Francisco*; Wlochaty, *Bunt I Milosc*.

### Reviewer Spotlight: Rex Reason (RR)

**Les Raillizes Dénudés, *Le 12 Mars 1977 à Tachikawa*.** This sonic oddity may be one of the most rewarding albums I've ever heard. The band's history is unclear at best, but apparently they started as a sort of Exploding Plastic Inevitable-era Velvet Underground-inspired band in the mid/late '60s in Japan, the French sounding name only further confusing the issue. If nothing else, Les Raillizes Dénudés certainly learned the expressive power and potential of feedback from the Velvets. During the best moments of this two disc live set, the drums and bass pound in mind numbingly simplistic rhythmic patterns as waves of the most piercing and melodic guitar feedback wash over your ears and change your body chemistry. The vocals are a bit loud in the mix but also drenched in enough reverb to add to the psychedelic and otherworldly vibe of the music. Six of the seven tracks are over 10 minutes long, so the point is to create texture with sound and paint with noise rather than to fashion concise ditties. With that in mind, either take my pretentious claptrap as a stern warning or a gushing recommendation.

**Five ways to separate the wheat from the chaff:** The Melvins, (a) *Senile Animal*; NoMeansNo, *All Roads Lead to Ausfahrt*; The Pogues, *Rhino* reissues of the first five albums; Totimoshi, *Ladrón*; Sunn O))) and Boris, *Altar*.

### Reviewer Spotlight: Matthew Siblo (MS)

**Digger, *Powerbait*.** If Freud were alive today, I'm almost positive he'd want to re-tool the framework of his psychoanalytic theory from early childhood to grades nine through 12. Coming from the all-boys Catholic school I did, I'm sure that my prognosis wouldn't be all that bright, but surely those formative years have more applicability to my life than potty training. Anyway, in spite of the feelings of alienation and psychosis one accrues during adolescence, certain things kept us going. For me, they were getting nachos and Slurpees on Wednesdays, egg and cheese sandwiches on the train in the morning, and, of course, Pennsylvania Dutch-flavored pop punk. At the time, bands like Plow United, Weston, and Digger heavily resonated within my small circle of friends. But whereas Plow was a bit more serious and Weston earnest, Digger's *Powerbait* was pure goofball bliss. Asshole teachers? Sure. Awkward interactions with pretty girls from superior social standing? You bet. The gut-wrenching emotion involved in getting a stupid haircut and wanting that beanie you left at your ex-lovers' family home? We've all been there. Yet, none of this compared to the gut busting emotion of "Ducky's Curse," a bittersweet ballad about Jon Cryer's longing desire for his pink-clad, red-headed soul mate. Even while writing about it, I can smell the gym socks. Looking back, I don't know whether I should thank Digger for saving me or scold them for eternally stunting my emotional growth. Either way, Freud would be shaking his head in disapproval.

**It's not what it looks like:** Built to Spill, *Keep it Like a Secret*; Annuals, *Be He Me*; Jens Lekman, *Oh, You're So Silent*; Jens; The Olivia Tremor Control, *Dawn at Cubist Castle*; Maritime, *We, the Vehicles*.

### Reviewer spotlight: Mike Vinikour (MXV)

**Damned, the, *Grimly Fiendish*.** Stop me if you've heard this before . . . Back when I was an angry skateboarding teenager consuming all things punk rock, one of the earliest bands I heard and really took a liking to was the Damned. In fact, to this day, they remain of my most favorite punk rock bands ever, and I have more Damned records in the Punk Vault than any other artist by a huge margin! At the time, this particular single was released the band had just signed to MCA and they had altered their sound a bit. It wasn't that drastic of a change, and it followed the progression the band showed on the previous two albums, but this one was a little more accessible than even those were: a little more goth and a little more '80s sounding. This was their first single (and mine came on white vinyl) from the forthcoming *Phantasmagoria* album, and as catchy as the A-side was, the flipside, "Edward the Bear," was the real standout on this single. I played this record for everyone I came in contact with, including the girl I had the biggest crush on in my entire life. That song was the only thing I ever played her from my record collection that she really liked (and in fact I think I ended up making a tape of it for her). Sadly, it wasn't enough to get her to date me!

**If I'm stuck driving, you're stuck hearing:** Harkonen, *Shake Harder Boy*; Curl Up and Die, everything; Bad Brains, *ROIR Sessions*; PIL, *Metal Box*; Big Black, *Songs About Fucking*.



**Viva La Foxx – I Knew it Wasn't Love, But . . . , CD**

In every Bond movie, there's a scene where they introduce the seductress where the camera lingers on her eyes. And it never fails to make me lose my shit. There's more than simply a pair of beautiful eyes, but an overwhelmingly intense sexuality bursting out from behind those retinas. A drinking buddy of mine endearingly calls it "The Fuck-Me Gaze." In public, it's an undeniable tractor beam—a reckless confidence fueled by sex and alcohol. It's certainly not playful or graceful, but few deny its carnal allure. This Cincinnati four-piece captures this sleazy haze beautifully. The songs are lo-fi, art-damaged, and mostly inaccessible, but they remain compelling. Viva La Foxx's blues-driven direction gives the razor's edge a sultry appeal, and the disc's tight performance shows that their appeal isn't a clumsy swagger. The guitar doesn't drunkenly meander, but spastically careens to punctuate with calculated noise. The rhythm section is solid, successfully leading the band through well-timed dynamics. Both singers add to the prickly cacophony, leaping between a suggestive cooing to helpless yelping. It's a dangerous formula that can lead to very bad decisions (like trading STDs), but their combination teeters towards relishing debauchery instead of regrettable disaster. (VC)

Shake It, [shakeitrecords.com](http://shakeitrecords.com), [lafxmusic.com](http://lafxmusic.com)

**Wiggins, the – Greatest Apes, CDEP**

Part electro-surf punk from outer space, part David Lynch outtake, and part-home brewed garage opiate, I'm not exactly sure what the Wiggins are, but

whatever it is, it's fuckin' rad. Think the redefinition of lo-fi, Lou Reed in a garage disposal, Johnny Thunders' vampire alter-ego, leper underwear parties, and successful-noir amateur snake charming. Rumor has it there's just one local Houstoner behind all this madness, which makes the effort even more impressive. This is the stuff of magic that gluttonous hipster vultures and college radio DJs will be getting all weak in the knees about once Pitchfork clocks in a 8.372, so do yourself a favor and get it while it's fresh. (BM)

Girl Gang, [swarmofangels.com/girlgang.html](http://swarmofangels.com/girlgang.html), [geocities.com/thewigginsrocks](http://geocities.com/thewigginsrocks)

**V/A – Backstreets of American Oi Volume 2 – Ten Years Later, 2xCD**

It has been quite a while since a compilation has captivated me the way that this second volume in the *Backstreets of American Oi* did. With so many label samplers and compilations featuring only previously released materials floating around out there, I have largely turned a blind eye to most recently released comps. What Street Anthem Records did differently for this series is search high and low for contributions from bands you will instantly recognize, as well as some that you will be hearing for the very first time. That alone makes this 53-track double CD a good investment. Even more of a reason to pick this up is the quality of the material selected. In fact, I've listened through the discs twice and haven't been tempted to hit skip once. My personal favorites are the contributions courtesy of the Bruisers, Suburban Lockdown, Broken Heroes, Patriot,

Common Voice, and Niblick Henbane. Tastes vary, but anyone with even the slightest interest in street and oi punk will find something to their liking here, and isn't that the point behind a compilation in the first place? (BN)

Street Anthem, [streetanthemrecords.com](http://streetanthemrecords.com)

**V/A – Live at KEXP Vol. 2, CD**

KEXP is and should be viewed as a shining beacon of hope for all of independent radio and what it is capable of. Located in Seattle, they've been around since the '70s but only recently started releasing live, in-studio compilations—this is the second attempt, and all proceeds from sales directly benefit both the station and KEXP.org. Given that these tracks were recorded (as the title implies) live at KEXP, both the sound quality and performances themselves are highly variable. Some acts shine in this format while others fall flat on their ass; such is the shifty nature of the in-studio performance. This comp features the usual Northwest acts (the Decemberists, Sleater-Kinney), in addition to a few newer ones that have already achieved a hefty amount of critical drool this past year (Editors, Tapes 'n' Tapes), with each group performing the single from their latest album. Most of the choices are predictable, higher-profile independent acts, which is a little strange given the diversity of KEXP's usual programming. Airing everything from world music to ambient to blues to the long-running weekend punk show *Sonic Reducer*, it seems there could've been plenty of room for many lesser-known acts to share in the spotlight. If you can get past the creepy, sugarcoated cover, there

are nonetheless some impressive performances to be found here—but isn't the whole point of being independent that you don't have to try to please everyone? (SBM)

KEXP, 113 Dexter Ave N, Seattle, WA 98109, [kexp.org](http://kexp.org)

**V/A – Release the Bats, CD**

There's no fear that a label like Three One G would thoughtfully take on the Birthday Party in tribute. Such endeavors fail when bands from the same genre attempt to ape the band that heavily influenced said genre. Straight homage requires a sense of creative originality, especially if you want to be a good cover band. So, who else to take on one of punk's darkest and most inaccessible bands? Three One G's roster is diverse enough for that variety, but all of their bands do share a common interest for the macabre. I'm honestly surprised the press sheet for this release wasn't black ink silkscreened on black paper and smeared with pig blood. Okay . . . not surprised, but disappointed. Anyways, while more appropriate than their Queen tribute, we're all still waiting for the Joy Division one. This heavy hitter-filled tribute includes: the Plot to Blow up the Eiffel Tower, Das Oath, T Cells, Cattle Decapitation, Year Future, Ssion, Ex Models, Les Georges Leningrad, Rah Bras, Melt Banana, Chinese Stars, Celebration, Kill Me Tomorrow, Get Hustle, Numbers, Error, Daughters, and Some Girls. Of course, as with all tribute albums, the ones that stray from mimicry offer the most compelling takes (Cattle Decapitation and Melt Banana stand out for me). (VC)

Three One G, PO Box 178262, San Diego, CA 92177, [threeoneg.com](http://threeoneg.com)

## REVIEWS APPEARING ONLINE AT PUNKPLANET.COM/REVIEWS

ZUP – Teenage Mondo Trash, CD

Arpe, GT – Doused Fires #2, CD-R

BA Baracus – S/T, CD

Bang! Bang! – Decked Out, CD

Blue Dot, the – Diamond Lite, CD

Botch – Unifying Themes Redux, CD

Boys on Trial – Guantanamo Boy, CD

Brass Castle – S/T, CD

Bullys, the – BQE Overdrive, CD

Bushmen, the – War and Soda, CD

Chrash – Audio Feng Shui, CD

Chrome Pistola – Information War, CD

DK Limb – Defy Define Definition, CD

Denver in Dallas – 2 Songs, CD

Eyes Averted – Paralyzing Passion and Notion, CDEP

Fake Fiction – Raw Yimg, CD

Fight Amputation/Exosus – Split, CD

Fire Don't Care – Be What You Are, CD

Frontside Five – Fall out of Line, CD

Gamenight – Simple Starts in the Mind, CD

Glory of This – The Lover, the Liar, the Ruse, CD

Holford, Casey – All Young and Beautiful, CD

Houston, Jenny/William Whitmore – Hallways of Always, CDEP

Hudson Falcons – Singles Collection 1997 – 2002, CD

Hush Hush Revolution – Criminal Class USA is Hush Hush Revolution, CD

Hyvönen, Frida – Until Death Comes, CD

Instrumental Quarter – Traffic Jam, CD

Jab Mica Och El – ABC Hej I'm Cola, CD

Jena/Berlin – Passion Waits as the Program Keeps Going, CD

Jolenes, the – Get it to Go, CD

Jolts, the – Jinx, CDEP

Kultur Shock – We Came to Take Your Jobs Away, CD

La Guillotine – Throat, CD

La Snacks – Brown, Orange, Black and Gray, CD

Latterman – We are Still Alive, CD

Leaving the Fold – S/T, CDEP

Machine Gun TV, the – Go, CDEP

Mad Ripple, the – Sink and/or Swim, CD

Mirah – Joyride: Remixes, CD

Media Dropout – Muddled, CD

Misguided, the – Home Town Zeros, CD

Model Citizen – Save it for the Camp Fire, CD

Mouth of the Architect – The Ties That Bind, CD

Much the Same – Survive, CD

Mutts, the – I Us We You, CD

Neosonic – Fast Forward, CDEP

New Mexican Revolution, the – Theories of Sun & Rain, CDEP

Nire – My Father's Record Player, CD

Noxagt – S/T, CD

Overdogs, the – Pawnshop Masterpiece, CD

Panda & Angel – S/T, CDEP

Plains, the – The Boy in the Mansuit, CD

Pseudo Existors – Stamp Out Normality, CD

Psychedelic Horseshit – Who Let the Dogs Out?, 7"

Rory – We're up to no Good, We're up to no Good, CD

Roy Owens Jr, the – Good Times, CD

Sabertooth Tiger – Extinction is Inevitable, CD

Sex Robots – S/T, CD

Sexy! – Boma Yel, CD

Skygreen Leopards, the – Disciples of California, CD

Sobriety Starts Tomorrow – In the Key of Whiskey, CD

Something Fierce – Come for the Bastards, CD

System and Station – Here is Now, CD

Terror – Always the Hard Way, CD

To Hell and Back – S/T, CD

Toxic Narcotic – 21st Century Discography, CD

Traindodge – Wolves, CD

Twentyfour Hour Hell – Introducing My Rock 'n' Roll, CD

Two Ton Boa – Parasiticide, CD

Unlucky Atlas – S/T, CDEP

Vopat – Tell Them we are Dead, CD

Wizardzz – Hidden City of Taurmond

Your Eyes My Dreams – Weapons are Useless, CD

Zooparty – S/T, CD

V/A – Project Bicycle, CD



# BOOKS



## Serious Adverse Events: An Uncensored History of AIDS Celia Farber

In 1988, *SPIN* magazine published Celia Farber's interview with controversial AIDS scientist, Peter Duesberg, in which he famously challenged the link between HIV and AIDS. The interview was both the end and the beginning of Farber's career. For giving voice to Duesberg's claims, the National Institutes of Health denied her access to their scientists, and the mainstream scientific establishment gave her the collective cold shoulder. Cut off from conventional sources, Farber began to write about people who questioned the dominant nar-

rative surrounding AIDS. Those voices fill the pages of her new book, *Serious Adverse Events: An Uncensored History of AIDS*. Farber's critics argue that her work is dangerously misleading. She presents AIDS as a multifactorial syndrome that may or may not be directly caused by HIV, which has angered prominent scientists and AIDS activists who believe that her writing endangers public AIDS education. This year, a group called the Treatment Action Campaign posted a 37-page article citing over 50 errors in Farber's reporting and labeled her an "AIDS denialist." On the other hand, Farber has credentials. She's been writing about AIDS for twenty years, has published articles in *Harper's*, *Esquire*, and *Salon*, and her dissident sources include a Nobel laureate, the founding editor of the medical journal *AIDS Research*, and the former Director of OPCRO (the government-run Office for Policy in Clinical Research Operations). *Serious Adverse Events* is a page-turner, filled with intense personalities battling over life and death. Farber is angry with the dominant AIDS establishment, and her inflammatory style might be her strongest rebellion against what she considers the mainstream conspiracy to suppress truths about AIDS. Farber avoids the euphemisms of "objective" journalism, bordering on caricature in her descriptions of Robert Gallo, the controversial co-discoverer of HIV. Her dramatic, readable style is reactionary in the best sense of the word. When scientific reports and mainstream journalism present AIDS research as tried and true fact, it's difficult for a layperson to doubt what they read. But Farber's in-your-face bias leaves room for the reader to draw their own conclusions about the arguments at stake. And some of the questions Farber raises deserve consideration. The book's most compelling points aren't scientific. They're social. Farber looks at the panic that surrounded AIDS in the early 1980s and questions whether scientific conclusions made in the pressure-cooker of AIDS paranoia shouldn't be revisited. She examines the motives behind administering toxic drugs to AIDS patients without understanding how they work or the potentially fatal consequences. And she challenges the current labeling of AIDS as an African disease, spread by alleged promiscuity and primitive practices in the Third World. Despite its flaws, *Serious Adverse Events* is an important chapter in the ongoing chronicling of AIDS. It opens up the debate and gives shape to some of the nebulous questions surrounding the disease. After twenty years of research, we still don't know that much about AIDS. *Serious Adverse Events* gives weight to that uncertainty and leaves you wondering if what we don't know can hurt us more than we think. —Sarah Coffey

Melville House Publishing

## The Longest Pregnancy Melissa Fraterri

I want to live in Melissa Fraterri's fictional world. Well, sorta. The characters she's populated in the mostly-Midwestern based stories of *The Longest Pregnancy* might fall asleep on any given night to find they have the power to inhabit another person's body, or wake up in the morning and discover they've become attached to the torso to their partner. But the curiosities, like the family who operate and star in a water show swimming with sharks or the giant couple (literally, giants) who move in next door, aren't the focus of the stories. Instead of fully exploring the book's odd features, and explaining how a typical American family starts a shark swimming extravaganza or why a couple of giants choose to settle down in the Ohio Valley, Fraterri uses them as devices to develop and even test the relationships between couples, friends, parents and their children. After waking up and discovering a four-inch stretch of shared skin on their abdomens, the newlyweds in *The Attached Couple* have to fulfill their vows by figuring out how to survive together "until death do us part." The book's weak point comes in a pair of extremely short stories, *Bejeweled* and *The Memory Woman*. Both begin with intriguing premises, but are ended abruptly after too few pages. The adulterous narrator in *Bejeweled* hits the jackpot when an olive green easy chair starts producing diamonds and pearls from within its seat cushion. A group of children visit *The Memory Woman* to help them navigate their way through the small seaside town they live in, asking questions about the inner thoughts of animals and how a pair of girls drowned. The landscape in the latter story is rich and fascinating, worthy of a dozen more pages of creation. Throughout the collection, Fraterri shows a deep understanding and empathy with the human condition, even when we're faced with extraordinary circumstances. After all, what would you do if a giant moved in next door and wanted to swap spouses? —Nancy Rohlen

Swallow's Tale Press

## We Don't Need Another Wave: Dispatches from the Next Generation of Feminists

various authors, edited by Melody Berger

Editor and founder of *The F-word* zine Melody Berger compiled this collection of essays to critique the ways that contemporary feminism is discussed in the media. "We don't need another wave," she writes in her introduction. "We need a movement." The foreword is by *Bitch* Magazine editor and founder Lisa Jervis, who says that the "wave" terminology has outlived its usefulness and is often used by the mainstream press to position second and third wavers as "anti"

one another, (ie, second wavers reject humor and sex; third wavers aren't politically active). Jervis's take is that the idea of a simplistic generational divide serves no one, and that we should keep discussing the main point—gender justice—while retaining myriad voices and opposing perspectives that move in the same direction: forward. Topically, the essays run an impressive gamut—covering everything from Latina reproductive rights activists, a critique of the gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender wedding industry, the organization of sex worker rights, one woman's reclamation of sexuality after abuse, and the inherent issues of being one-half of an interracial lesbian couple. Contributor Jessica Valenti runs a blog called *Feministing.com* and writes with intelligent passion about the image problem of the word "feminist" and why women shouldn't shrink from it, in her piece, "You're a Feminist. Deal." Another stirring essay is by Kat Marie Yoas, who grew up in a trailer park, and later ended up in academia. Yoas grapples eloquently with the complexities of living simultaneously in two disparate worlds, including identity-confusion, class-anger, and insulting assumptions made and spoken by her colleagues. In "Steam Room Revelations," writer, teacher, and filmmaker Courtney Martin tells of coming to term with body issues and self-consciousness via a raucous group of older women who frequent the steam room at her local YMCA. What's thrilling about the collection is how firmly grounded in activism the contributors are. The diverse bylines are made up of educators, artists, poets, filmmakers, founders of non-profits, students and performers, all who live and breathe the issues they're writing about. I'd nitpick that several of the confessional poems embedded in the collection don't serve it well, but mostly this is a gaggle of brash, fun, enlightening, fearless, and on-point essays by people working in the trenches of contemporary feminist issues, and for that it's well worth your lunch money. —Gretchen Kalwinski

Seal Press

## Howard Who?

Howard Waldrop

For some reason science fiction always seems to get linked with adolescents who know more about Chewbacca's home world than dating, and grown ups who think sleeping on *Space: 1999* sheets is a sign of youthful flair. It's these kinds of associations that either scare readers off outright or allow them to admit to reading it only as a self-deprecating guilty pleasure. What a shame. Because if they ever bothered to get past the labels and the stereotyping flung around by the literati, they might dig deep enough into the canon and see for themselves that writers



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Edited by Javier Ramirez

like Howard Waldrop write sci-fi that not only ignores the hyperspace and ray gun trappings of the genre, but also says some fascinating and funny things. *Howard Who?*, a re-issue from 1986, contains an enthusiastically oddball mix of stories without a single spaceship, far off planet, or robot (unless you count a trio of animatronic Disney characters inadvertently sprung to life far, far into the future). No, what Waldrop really seems to enjoy working with are the "what-ifs" of our past and in our future. He likes to undo the facts, flaunt history, and show us through a door that just a second ago we'd have sworn was a window. This is fiction where Bronco Billy and Hitler hunt the same vampire, where sumo wrestlers use their minds to heft opponents out of the ring, and where the dodo bird gets an extension on its lifespan. It's not all whimsy though, and a few of the stories lack the free-range quirk of the others, offering grimmer, more stoic observations of mankind when his world turns to crap. In "Dr. Hudson's Secret Gorilla" a man is saved from a car wreck by an honest to goodness mad scientist and has his mind implanted into a gorilla's body. But when the saved (?) man suffers the abuses of a sadistic lab assistant his already teetering sanity slips away. He begins to identify with apes, empathizing over the indignities visited on them by Hollywood and society. By the time he breaks free it seems he is seeking revenge not so much for himself, but for gorillas, and it is hard not to believe that the metaphor here is about bigotry and striving against overwhelming popular misconceptions that can surround a person on all sides. Waldrop is a writer who clearly has fun mixing and matching reality and his own imagination. Even in the pieces where he's aiming at some other, deeper target, something tinged by pathos and concern, there are moments of levity and signs that he is having a grand old time with what he's doing. —Steve Newman

Small Beer Press

### **I Cried, You Didn't Listen: A Survivor's Expose of the California Youth Authority**

Dwight E. Abbot

Most incarceration stories address in some way the cyclical nature of the System: abuse leading to shame; shame to revenge; revenge to punitive action; castigation to shame, and so on. It's such a pervasive characterization of how people become criminals—and how they stay that way—that we have casual terms to describe it: "back in the slammer," "prison's revolving door," etc. Few stories, however, so forthrightly and horrifically express just how injurious and inescapable a cycle this is as Dwight Abbot's autobiography *I Cried, You Didn't Listen*. Abbot

was first committed to the care of the state, when, at a young age, his parents were injured in an auto accident and his alcoholic aunt proved incapable of caring for him and his siblings. Institutionalized behind the walls of the California Youth Authority—an agency that spends over \$400 million annually to incarcerate children—Abbot immediately experienced severe physical, sexual, and psychological abuse. At the age of nine, he was socialized into a system dominated by violence and victimization where sexual assault (both by fellow wards and predatory guards), racial stereotypes, and gang fights were the norm. Here, if you did not assimilate, you often did not survive. Once entrenched in this system of retributive justice—to the point he becomes one of the toughest boys, even designated "dorm captain"—it is impossible for Abbot to break out of his situation. He's transferred from juvenile hall to a boys' home to a series of successively more severe institutions and eventually to federal prison (when he's only 17). He makes one failed escape attempt after another, subjecting himself to extreme injury. More than anything, Abbot's story demonstrates that despite whatever circumstances initially cause authorities to place children in the CYA, once there, these young people are practically guaranteed a lifetime of incarceration. Indeed, *I Cried* conveys the cycle of criminal behavior in its most vicious form. When a CYA counselor rapes him on his third night in juvenile hall, Abbot immediately retreats into himself emotionally and is ashamed to discuss the situation with anyone, including his family. This incites a cycle of shame, aggression, and punishment; it may also explain the emotional distance with which he recounts sickening acts of brutality, committed to him and by him, while growing up behind bars. The CYA is now called the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's Division of Juvenile Justice. As the book's introduction points out, however, this new title (a gesture toward reform on the part of Governor Schwarzenegger) doesn't change the tragic fact that today's institutions are still rife with mistreatment, leading to extremely high recidivism rates. Dwight Abbot's story—originally a prison diary written on toilet paper then a widely circulated underground document and now, at last, a book—serves as a desperate plea for the reform of the juvenile justice system. As difficult of an account it is, *I Cried* demands to be heard. —Laura Pearson

AK Press

### **Darker Than the Deepest Sea: the Search for Nick Drake**

Trevor Dann

Many of us discovered Nick Drake when some cooler

friend played his albums, surprising us with music we felt we'd always known. We fell hard for the songs themselves, and later for the mystery of Drake's brief life. And for us, the idea of knowing all there is to know about Drake is at once tantalizing and so intimate as to feel almost unseemly. Drake died in 1974 at the age of 26. He either overdosed on prescription antidepressants or committed suicide to escape the addiction and depression that made it increasingly impossible for him to function. But in the last five years of his life he created three haunting albums that feel timeless. One of Drake's strengths as an artist is that, though his lyrics are sometimes vague and immature, they are startlingly raw and naked, giving one a sense of intimacy with him that a conventional biography could never provide. Dann's book is plagued by problems that any Drake biographer would encounter. Drake was notoriously shy and avoided live performances. He conducted only one diffident interview during his lifetime, and seems to have revealed little to anyone of his interior life. However, strong biographies have been written about difficult subjects, and Dann could have written an account that drew the reader in to the challenges of investigating Drake's life. Instead, he focuses mainly on the well-researched details of Drake's life: the when and where of every show and recording session, his schoolmaster's recollections, the trips he took with friends. He offers his own opinions on the tricky questions—was it suicide or accidental overdose, who did he sleep with, was his depression and decline the result of addiction and mental illness or childhood trauma and professional disappointment—very briefly in his eight-page afterword, giving the book a limp and almost apologetic coda instead of a satisfying summation. There is a cool reticence and propriety laced throughout Dann's book. And since Drake is a cipher, he invariably becomes a ghostly image for us to project on. The only place Dann invests himself as a writer is in the book's exhaustive discography, packed with information on musician lineups, the tunings Drake chose, and speculations on the origins of the lyrics. Here is the heart of Dann's interest, and the heart of the book. Though, sadly, not the heart of Nick Drake. —Eiren Caffall

Da Capo Press

### **The Sandman Papers: An Exploration of the Sandman Mythology**

various authors, edited by Joe Sanders

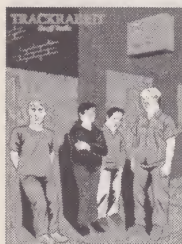
Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* has been an enormously popular comics series since its inception, especially

among students and teachers of myriad disciplines. An essay collection such as *The Sandman Papers* has long been desired by the series' fans. This book should be enough to satiate the demands of most of those fans, as it contains 12 wide-ranging essays of criticism, exploration, and appreciation; it definitely satisfied me. Overall, the essays are of an excellent quality. They are well-written and thought-provoking enough for an academic, while still being accessible to the casual fan. Not all of the essays, however, are quality material. One in particular failed to live up to the excellence of its counterparts. The essay titled, "Illusory Adversaries," written by K.A. Laity, was distinctly inferior to the other essays in this collection. The author attempts to examine gender power issues as seen in *The Kindly Ones*, the ninth volume of *The Sandman* that also contains the story's climax. She quotes rather liberally from a radical feminist author and uses said author's statements as facts, which then form the essay's argument. The main point of the paper is that the entire *Sandman* arc (particularly *The Kindly Ones*) is supportive of a patriarchal world that denies women any real power. The essayist and the argument fail to deliver on almost all counts, especially once you consider two of Gaiman's most famous and popular characters: Death and Delirium. Both are distinctly female, and both are extremely powerful. In the story, *The Kindly Ones*, it is only with the help of Death that Dream is able to abdicate his responsibilities and set himself free. The story is not even remotely concerned with gender power struggles. Instead, it is concerned with Dream's ultimate tragic flaw: his resistance to change, and with the consequences imposed by that flaw. The biggest problem in this particular essay is the author's failure to recognize the story as a classical tragedy. She concerns herself instead with incidental, unimportant details (like the placement of women on the page) and how they can be used to support a preconceived notion. There is another excellent essay in this collection that actually does concern itself with gender issues as explored in *Sandman* Vol. 5, *A Game of You*. That story is about gender identity and roles, and the essayist, David Bratman, does an excellent job of examining them. This collection of literary criticism is aimed at both the scholarly and non-academic readership who enjoy Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* as modern graphic literature, and those who love to delve into the meanings of its mythology. All said and done, *The Sandman Papers* is an intelligent and thought-provoking collection. —Robin Rainer

Fantagraphics Books



# COMICS



## Trackrabbitt #2

*Trackrabbitt* is the single most impressive self-published comic that I've seen in recent memory. It's therefore not surprising that the last issue of *Trackrabbitt* has been nominated for an Ignatz Award. The narrative is so artfully done and the dialogue is so true to life, that this could easily stand on its own as a short story. If anything, the artwork is the weak component. While decent enough, it could benefit from greater attention to detail. The

story centers on a handful of high school buddies who are closing in on 30 but not yet coming to terms with adulthood. Wes is still fumbling around in film school, chasing undergrads, occasionally snorting coke, and hitting his mom up for cash. Gabe teaches and coaches at their old high school, and though he's outwardly a model of maturity, he later admits that he's bored and miserable. He also has a bowel ailment that figures prominently in the plot and results in this memorable bit of dialogue: "Has that ever happened to you, Wes? Have you failed to get laid, to even try to get laid, because you couldn't stop the flow of blood from your asshole?" Fittingly enough, an old high school drama emerges as the narrative's focal point, and, of course, the irritable bowel asserts itself at a most inopportune moment. (AC)

\$4, Geoff Vasile, [www.geoffvasile.com](http://www.geoffvasile.com)

## The Bakers: Do These Toys Belong Somewhere?

Seems like 10 years ago that Kyle Baker made me so damned happy with books like *The Cowboy Wally Show* and *You Are Here. Do These Toys...*? is a different beast, but hits some familiar notes. Mining the comedic highjinks of fatherhood, this isn't entirely unlike something you'd read in your daily newspaper. Only, y'know, funny. (CB)

\$18.95, Kyle Baker, Kyle Baker Publishing, ISBN 0-9747214-3-3

## Bosko #1

Though *Bosko* offers a few cheap laughs, it's unlikely that anyone but the most ardent punk historian will be interested in seeking out this comic. *Bosko* is the twisted spawn of John Holmstrom, who's best known for founding *Punk Magazine*, which served as the groundbreaking chronicle of the then nascent 1970s New York punk scene. After *Punk Magazine* folded, Holmstrom launched *Comical Funnies*, a short-lived comics magazine that featured regular appearances by *Bosko*, but these days is best remembered for helping launch the cartooning career of Peter Bagge. This inaugural issue of *Bosko* is actually mostly a collection of older strips from *Comical Funnies*, though it does include a few more recent efforts. *Bosko*'s debaucherous antics seem quaint and almost antiquated compared to his comics heirs such as *Angry Youth Comics*' Loady McGee. Indeed, the only instance that inspired actual laughter for me was *Bosko*'s vile stream of vomit (replete with cartoon chunks, of course) during one hungover

episode. In fact, *Bosko*'s single most hilarious moment is sadly not within the pages of the comic itself, but rather depicted on its back cover, which, in the course of promoting various *Bosko*-related ephemera, depicts the tiny image of *Comical Funnies* #1 showing a manic *Bosko* asking four bemused Ramones, "Hey guys! Do you need a bongo player in your group?" (AC)

\$4.95, John Holmstrom, PMB 675, 200 E. 10th St., NY, NY 10003, [www.bosko.com](http://www.bosko.com)

## Bowhunter #1

Having broken my arm once, there was a lot I could relate to in this mini. The whole comic was done while Chic had a cast on his drawing hand, which is pretty impressive considering the art is still tight. I cracked up during the ass-wiping strip; it really does feel that weird. (HD)

\$1, Chic, Self-published, [www.nlightlightcomics.com](http://www.nlightlightcomics.com)

## The Case of Madeline Smith

Rick Geary presents another installment in his series of historical murder stories steeped in period details. *The Case of Madeline Smith* is the carefully researched tale of a well-to-do Victorian woman who murders her lover, a lowly clerk, with arsenic after unsuccessfully attempting to cut off their affair when she receives a marriage proposal from a more socially acceptable suitor. Geary's pen-and-ink drawings brim with details that bring the Victorian era to life in this haunting and fascinating hardcover graphic novel. (LG)

\$15.95, Rick Geary, NBM Publishing, 555 8th Avenue, Suite 1202, New York, NY 10018. [www.nbmpub.com](http://www.nbmpub.com)

## Famous Fighters

This unusual comic is a compendium of nearly 10 years worth of goofy comics initially drawn by two friends to just amuse themselves, but now published to hopefully amuse others as well. Their single most successful creation is the Conan the Barbarian parody called "Barbarian Lord." One-page "Barbarian Lord" episodes recur periodically throughout this issue, giving the reader sufficient time to adjust to its comedic weirdness. Each episode finds Barbarian Lord typically confronted by some blustery foe whose bravado is unmercifully dispatched by Barbarian Lord's fist, sword, or battleaxe. Each slaying is then followed by a single-panel feature entitled "Poetry of Barbarian Lord," wherein BL offers a tersely worded, haiku-like account of some past atrocity. Though all of the comics are highly stylized and perfectly rendered (the two creators work in illustration and graphic design), most of the other stories tend to overstay their welcome. One longer feature that mostly works, however, is an epic poem involving a protagonist's Pong battle with Satan, which features inventive rhyming accompanied by wonderfully detailed illustrations of the cloven-hoofed Beelzebub. (AC)

\$5, Tom Pappalardo & Matt Smith, [www.famousfighters.com](http://www.famousfighters.com)

## Fuzz & Pluck

Making your way in the world today, they say, takes everything you've got. That's especially true for this hapless duo of a pitiful teddy bear and a grumpy plucked rooster who are as tripped-out as they are all-too-human. *Fuzz & Pluck* riffs on the classic buddy/journey tale, following the pair as they escape from being sold into slavery, seek enlightenment with a monkey Zen-master, get mistaken for road-kill, and more. Adults will love this comic for the sly commentaries on modern life, like the giant-carrot-wielding abolitionist-type hell-bent on revenge over lardy fast food, while kids will love the puke jokes. (LG)

\$12.95, Ted Stearn, Fantagraphics Books, 7563 Lake City Way, Seattle WA 98115; [www.fantagraphics.com](http://www.fantagraphics.com)

## Hester & Galatea

This self-published comic is an extremely well-polished children's story, but even with its slight edge (the main character develops an eating disorder for a brief span), it's unlikely to appeal to readers of *Punk Planet*. Still, only the most stonehearted hipster would fail to be moved by the story's sweet conclusion. School of Visual Arts cartooning undergrad Chari Pere has created a classic children's story about a little girl whose imaginary friend helps her overcome her self-esteem issues. While this sort of narrative may be a bit worn, Pere throws in enough fantastical flourishes to sustain the reader's interest.

For instance, after some school hall teasing, Hester looks into the mirror and sees a hideous visage, but even afterward the formerly sweet-faced little girl remains transmogrified for a spell. It will be interesting to see if Pere succeeds in becomes eminent in the world of children's books and comics. (AC)

[No price given], Chari Pere, [www.charipere.com](http://www.charipere.com)

## I Really Stepped in It This Time #5

I was straight-up shocked when I found out halfway through the book that the author just turned 25. I'm all for keeping things simple, but up until that point I was convinced this book was just the autobiographical ramblings of your typical 16 year-old. I honestly don't know if this is actually the way this guy thinks or if this is some kind of conscious dumbing-down in order to up that precious quotient. Either way, you'd have a hard time finding a more banal read. (HD)

\$2, Brian Dubin, Self-published, [abracadaverr@yahoo.com](mailto:abracadaverr@yahoo.com)

## An Inside Job #3

Most people inwardly groan whenever a friend wants to share a recent dream. In a dreamscape, anything can happen, and perhaps it's that very lack of dramatic tension that makes for boring storytelling. But somehow dreams make for more compelling content in the comics medium. Eli Bishop's collection of dreams, spanning his early adolescence to his thirties, is surprisingly entertaining. He is talented at transforming the peculiar logic of dreams into mostly coherent storylines—even when negotiating the abrupt and inexplicable changes in plot and setting that are so common in slumberland. But what's truly impressive about this issue of *An Inside Job* is the dizzying array of cartooning styles that shift to complement each new dream. One lightly comedic dream features a breezy style that wouldn't be out of place in a *New Yorker* cartoon, while a far creepier dream features carefully crosshatched renderings on a noirish scratchboard background. While Bishop does succeed in relating his dreams in an entertaining manner, it would be a real treat to see his virtuosic cartooning abilities applied to a slightly more conventional narrative. (AC)

\$4, Eli Bishop, P.O. Box 40697, San Francisco, CA 94140, [www.graphthesia.com](http://www.graphthesia.com)

## The Last Island

A boy lives a fairly contented life alone on a tiny island (think the desert island from *The Far Side*) then some cell phone-wielding dude shows up and fells a palm tree. Tensions soar and hostilities are reciprocated: mutually assured destruction seems inevitable. Meanwhile, components of some sort of aircraft periodically wash ashore. Free of dialogue or specific context, *The Last Island* contains the sort of very open



About our reviews: We review independently produced comics. It's true. We do it for the love of reading them and for the love of writing about them. We don't care whether or not you buy them based on our reviews, but we will make every effort to give you what information we can about the comics we review that are available for sale. We review comics that are put out by the small publishing houses, comics that are put out by small art collectives, and comics that are put out by individuals. We'll try to review every comic we get in-house, but sometimes that's just not possible. Sorry.

This issue's reviewers are: Ari Charney (AC), Chris Burkhalter (CB), Hatuey Diaz (HD), Lisa Groshong (LG), Robin Rainer (RR) Edited by Laura Pearson

text that could be used to comment on any number of topics. It's to author Cahill's credit that his story fits nearly every hypothetical context I throw at it. But I must say, without help from the reader's compulsion to decipher or at least apply the material, *The Last Island* isn't quite engaging, mysterious, or dynamic enough to stand on its own. (CB)

\$6, Alex Cahill, New Radio, [www.newradiocomics.com](http://www.newradiocomics.com)

### The Leading Man

As a huge fan of the James Bond movies and novels, I approached *The Leading Man* with both anticipation and trepidation. After all, how do you improve on such classics? *The Leading Man*, while flawed, has an interesting twist to it. The comic revolves around a government agent whose cover is a high-profile actor. Good premise, but unfortunately, it fails to deliver. The content has a "been-there-done-that" feel to it, while the artwork has the look of "Hey, check me out! No, really, I can draw for mainstream comics!" *The Leading Man* will be a five-issue series, but judging from issue one, I can wait for the next installment. (RR)

\$3.50, B Clay Moore, Oni Press, [www.onipress.com](http://www.onipress.com)

### Little Timmy Gets Bigger

This comic cleverly uses layout against oversized pages to amplify the moral-driven story of the dangers of getting what you think you want. The storyline is *Spiderman*-inspired in its tale of a field trip to a science lab gone wrong. Unfortunately Spidey is much more fun. Still, this is incredibly promising work from a college student to watch. (LG)

[No price given], Jon Sperry, [www.jonsperry.com](http://www.jonsperry.com)

### Love, Vol. 4

It's hard to believe that Matt Fagan has managed to churn out four densely packed volumes of his *Love* series without any underground publishers giving him the resources to take his efforts to the next level. *Love* centers around the romance between a seemingly unlikely gay couple: Pokey, a skinny and bespectacled, liberty-spiked punker, and Jack, a pudgy, hirsute, and poodle-haired rocker. They also hang out with a homeless guy who lives in a crow's nest (constructed by Pokey during one of his fits of hyper-creativity) atop their apartment complex. If Fagan tries a little too hard to be weird, the humor and genuine sweetness behind each episode easily overcomes such shortcomings. In this issue, everyone works together to put on an illegal underground zombie musical. While this particular plotline was less compelling than Fagan's previous efforts (all well-worth seeking out), most of this volume deals less with the musical and more with the relationships between the characters. Fagan does his best work when depicting

some of the silliness that occurs between two people in love when in the privacy of their own home. (AC)

Matt Fagan, 1573 N. Milwaukee Ave., PMB #464, Chicago, IL 60622, [hadmatter@hotmail.com](mailto:hadmatter@hotmail.com)

### Meat Cake #15

This is one of those aesthetic ventures where personality counts for at least as much as content. Don't take this the wrong way; *Meat Cake* oozes personality and boasts a devoted—even adoring—fan base. Most of the stories are sorta silly, but the costume design, set dressing, and art direction are so precisely rendered that I don't feel altogether idiotic using theatrical terms to describe a pen-and-ink comic book. The zine-iest comic I've read this month, this issue contains short comic stories, raw food recipes, instructions on palm reading, and shadow puppetry tips. Each of these satisfies its designated function reliably, but moreso serves as a visit to the peculiar fascinations of singular multimedia cult figure Dame Darcy. And this is a good thing. Darcy's drawings are both doodley and carefully stylized. The comic is peopled by fairies, inventors, sailors, zombies, talking birds, mermaids, and packs of skinny scenester girls in lace and ruffles and eyeliner. Accurately describing the world of *Meat Cake* is more of a task than I'm up to. Suffice it to say that Darcy crafts a distinct universe that's strange but not entirely unfamiliar. Much more importantly, a universe that's consistent and convincing. I don't know that I'm in a hurry to read this again, yet I really can't stop looking at it. A weird and wonderful little object indeed. (CB)

\$3.95, Dame Darcy, Fantagraphics, 7563 Lake City Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115, [damedarcy.com](http://damedarcy.com)

### My Brain Hurts #3

*My Brain Hurts* is an earnest teen drama set in a queer punk milieu, but without the WB scrub-up. I wish I had the previous issues to read, because I feel like I had to infer a lot of character information from T-shirts and back-patches. But that's a bit like real life, no? Occasionally a tad self-righteous, this is generally quite likable, and the characters surprised me more than once, which is always a thumbs-up. It's no *De-grassi*, but it ain't bad at all. (CB)

\$3, Liz Baillie, [www.lizbaillie.com](http://www.lizbaillie.com)

### My Brain Hurts #4

This well-rendered comic offers a twist on the typically bittersweet adolescent experience by filtering it through the unique perspective of a gay punk rock girl. Indeed, when Kate, who sports a dyed and disheveled mohawk and alternates Aus Rotten and Pist T-shirts, chastises her new girlfriend for kissing her in public, she worries aloud that being gay on top of being outwardly punk will force her into double jeop-

ardy. School of Visual Arts cartooning grad Liz Baillie packs quite a bit of detail into each panel, whether depicting the flyer plastered wall of a record store or the signs touting various bargains outside a supermarket. Her direction of a scene is also impressive. When Kate is visiting a friend in the hospital, the first panel shows a little speech bubble emanating from a doorway located down a vast impersonal hospital corridor that hovers just over the heads of two nurses idling at the front desk. While such details are important for the sake of realism, it's the simple expressiveness of Kate's eyes that truly form the emotional core of the story and provide insight into her budding romance with Desdemona. At first, it's difficult to imagine what Kate might find attractive in homely nerd Desdemona. But Baillie allows the storyline to reveal their complementary attributes. Seemingly tough punk-rock chick Kate turns out to be rather passive, while mousey Desdemona is not afraid to assert herself whether she's asking Kate to be her girlfriend or defending Kate in front of a hostile high school lunchroom. (AC)

\$3, Liz Baillie, [www.lizbaillie.com](http://www.lizbaillie.com)

### Neurotica #2

The School of Visual Arts is so busy graduating talented cartoonists that one can only hope that enough comics enthusiasts exist to accommodate all of their future output. Hyeondo Park, a recent SVA graduate, employs a hyper-realistic style (with a slight manga influence) that successfully captures all sorts of details from a dog's playful curiosity to the jumble of detritus in a typical cityscape. *Neurotica* has very little dialogue, which only serves to further showcase Park's cartooning abilities. Although the first three stories are essentially unconnected, a surprise callback in the third episode finds all of the characters united in a surprising mise en scene. The final story shifts to the fantastical, and is, therefore, somewhat less compelling, especially given that all that transpires is merely a Nyquil-induced nightmare. (AC)

[No price given], Hyeondo Park, [www.hanaroda.net](http://www.hanaroda.net)

### The Non-Adventures of Trenchcoat and Kim #1

The title of this book ain't kidding: these are truly non-adventures. A bunch of stories of this guy, dressed up like a superhero, and his lady friend just sort of hanging out, this comic isn't bad—the art's strong—but there's just not a lot here to bring you back for more. As a serial it would be entertaining; as a stand-alone issue, it's kinda boring. (HD)

\$3, Chic, Self-published, [www.nightlightcomics.com](http://www.nightlightcomics.com)

### NorthWest Passage #2

This middle installment of Scott Chantler's *NorthWest Passage* trilogy transports readers back to the

treacherous world of the 18th-century Canadian frontier. Book two picks up after a heartless Frenchman captures Fort Newcastle. The few survivors scramble to mount a defense in this chilling story that's even more powerful considering it's true. Chantler's emotionally charged drawings bring even more tension to an already gripping storyline. I'm on the edge of my seat waiting for number three. (LG)

\$8.95, Scott Chantler, Oni Press, [www.onipress.com](http://www.onipress.com)

### Polly and the Pirates #6

*Polly and the Pirates* could be described as *Pirates of the Caribbean* meets the Power Puff Girls. This is not necessarily a bad thing. The comic is cute and fluffy, jumping between action and interpersonal intrigue. Like a cream puff, there isn't much substance here, but it's a tasty little bite. (LG)

\$2.99, Ted Naifeh, Oni Press, [www.onipress.com](http://www.onipress.com)

### Runaway Comics #1

*Runaway Comics* contains a wonderful cutting-edge satirical humor that makes you laugh out loud. Mark Martin's artwork has incredible flow to it; you can almost see the images moving across the pages. Coupled with his flair for "dramatic" sound effect words, *Runaway Comics* is one heck of an entertaining ride. Especially witty (although slightly outdated) is the story on the back page of the issue. I won't ruin the surprise by telling you what it involves, but I will caution that anyone who's highly sensitive to juvenile humor and fart jokes might want to avoid this one. For those of you (us) who enjoy such satire, go get yourself an issue, and enjoy. Just don't drink anything while reading. (RR)

\$3.50, Mark Martin, Fantagraphics Books, 7563 Lake City Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115 [www.fantagraphics.com](http://www.fantagraphics.com)

### Siberia

This comic is an autobiographical account of a Siberian boy's youthful passion for Cezanne, his military stint in Mongolia, his entry into art school, and his descent into alcoholism. Too steeped in cynicism to succumb to the pratfalls of sentimental recollection, this definitely fits under the "living in the Soviet Union was pretty fucked up" heading. Even so, *Siberia* sticks to an anecdotal brand of storytelling that moves the story out of the general "our lives" and into the specific "my life." Furthermore, Nikolai Maslov threads his life's landmarks on a string of small incidents, some of them unremarkable and some quite strange. Each development—from hearing a Deep Purple LP to meeting his future wife—is recounted with the same dulled calm, which is matched very neatly by Maslov's uninked pencil-only drawings. (CB)

\$19.95, Nikolai Maslov, trans. Blake Ferris, Soft Skull Press, [www.softskull.com](http://www.softskull.com), ISBN 1-933368-03-9



## COMICS

### Something So Familiar

The only dialogue in this entire comic is suggested by a perky happy face issuing from a car radio. This silent epic depicts a man grappling with the loss of his wife and child in an unforgiving city that only deepens his despair. The stark artwork makes skillful use of light and dark space. For instance, a significant percentage of the main character's face is comprised of two mournful black eyebrows that hint at his inner emotional abyss. Somehow the emotional release of the ending is happy even if the consequence of the character's final action is ultimately tragic. (AC)  
\$4, Alex Cahill, [www.newradiocomics.com](http://www.newradiocomics.com)

### StreETFables Anthology #1: Weird Sister

In *StreETFables*, Elizabeth Genco writes three stories about Daleth, a Brooklyn woman whose confidence in matters supernatural and spiritual earns her the companionship of Shock, an undead dog who helps her rescue the innocent from the wicked—the latter here comprised of rapists, animal abusers, paranoid madmen, and controlling undead boyfriends. Each story gets a distinct visual treatment from a different artist—Adam Boorman, Dash Shaw, and Jeff Zornow, with additional contributions from Leland Purvis and Brian Wood. The brevity of each story lends a welcome serial quality to the book, but with the exception of “Just Like That,” there isn’t really enough space to make the most of the unusual circumstances of each story’s situation. (CB)  
\$4.95, Elizabeth Genco, *StreETFables*, [www.streETFables.com/weird-sister](http://www.streETFables.com/weird-sister)

### The True Heart

Hilary Florido presents a sparse and quiet story that examines the nature of the human heart. Her cool screen-printed cover is a great complement to the comic's bold artwork. (LG)  
[No price given], Hilary Florido, [the\\_paper\\_mouse@yahoo.com](mailto:the_paper_mouse@yahoo.com)

### Uptight #1

In *Uptight*, Jordan Crane provides us with two new stories, one original and one a continuation of his *Keeping Two* mini comics. The art is superb, but nothing can hide the fact that there's just not much meat to these tales. The first one is a cliché that I won't ruin for you here, and the second one isn't much better. Crane takes on a non-linear narrative approach for the second story, trying desperately to make it more interesting than it actually is; unfortunately, it just ends up being confusing. (HD)  
\$2.50, Jordan Crane, *Fantagraphics*, [www.reddingk.com](http://www.reddingk.com)

### The Varicose Vernacular

*The Varicose Vernacular* is like an archeological artifact from the detention hall of a paranoid, dookie-preoccupied, long-eradicated civilization. It's imaginative, but I wouldn't exactly recommend it to friends. (CB)  
Eamon Espey, [www.usscalastrophe.com](http://www.usscalastrophe.com)

### Wasteland #1

For fans of post-apocalyptic stories, *Wasteland* will seem pretty basic. You have mutants, neo-primitive jargon, large expanses of desert, and a laconic protagonist who is untrusting of others. The writing is crisp and the art is well done, yet it can get a little confusing (especially during fight scenes). There are plenty of unanswered questions at the end of the issue but not much here warrants further reading. Not bad... just not great. (HD)  
\$2.99, Anthony Johnston, *Oni Press*, [www.thebigwet.com](http://www.thebigwet.com)

# ZINES



### RE/fuse #5

Predominantly geared toward hardcore enthusiasts—presumably those with an edge on things (pun absolutely intended)—*RE/fuse*'s editors and contributors are undeniably keeping the quill sharp and wet. Although based in Holland, the newsprint has a mid-sized circulation throughout Europe, and by the looks of things, will be in global demand soon. In terms of music, issue five—aside from a piece on neo-folk artist David Rovics—won't offer much if you're not into the heavier side of sound. And

this goes for the publication as a whole. However, for those inclined, the comprehensive interviews with Jacob Bannon of Converge, Kylesa, and Dutch newbies Abusive Action and State of Mind should spark interest. *RE/fuse*'s coverage of music surpasses that of most small to mid-sized zines, but their true worth can be found in the pieces that appeal to a broader audience—those focused on art and politics. By interviewing folks such as Mark Anderson (longstanding DC punk organizer/activist and author of *Dance of Days*); running thoroughly journalistic articles on the Clear Channel threat and the political poster art movement; and including an array of talented photographers and graphic artists, *RE/fuse* broadens the limited scope of hardcore fanzinedom and spans outward, in turn becoming a legitimate voice for progressive and radical culture. Bonus incentives include a couple savory vegan recipes, an overview on the effects and usage of basic vitamins, and the to-be-expected collection of record and book reviews. The only slight downside would be that for the American or British reader, there are instances (albeit rare) in which it becomes clear that the writers may not be entirely fluent in English. But hey, at least most Europeans, rather than refusing bilingualism, have some sort of grasp on more than one language. (BM)  
[www.refusefanzine.com](http://www.refusefanzine.com)

### Adjective Noun #1

At one point, a quarter of the way into this handwritten zine, Ben takes a whole page to write, “I hope the people at *Punk Planet* like this, ‘cuz than [sic] I can be cool.” Sorry, dude, if that's your only hope at being cool, you've struck out. *Adjective Noun* is a slapstick bedroom project—an inconsistent jumble of ramblings, line drawings, Sharpie scribbles, and two-sentence quips that are meant to be ironic or at least humorous but, unfortunately, fail at both. Examples: “My plane crashed and I was the only survivor. I kinda wish I would have died because I hate being on morning news shows”; or “I went to the library and burned every book except for *Fahrenheit 451* [sic] (isn't that ironic).” The good news is that the zine is both free and a quick read, so it doesn't really cost anything to check out. (AM)  
Free, Ben Endres, 701 Pine St., Athens WI 54411, [fuzzyrecords75@yahoo.com](mailto:fuzzyrecords75@yahoo.com)

### Bad Ideas #6

Following a year-long hiatus, Ann Arbor punk zine

*Bad Ideas* is back. In his introduction, Josh, the editor, makes a point that the zine has switched format (it's a 1/2-page production) and has sworn off the columns and reviews, thus making it feel less like a poor man's *MRR* and more like a community. To that extent, there's a bunch of material in here that appears—at least at first glance—to be of interest only to Ann Arbor punks, e.g.: a bad experience at a local venue; increasingly desperate and angry letters from an incarcerated local punk (who states that his story is presumably already known by everyone); an interview with Detroit high school punks Shiftfucker; and reminiscences about the closing down of a local punk house. There are a bunch of comics throughout, all of which are pretty good (including a funny one that reviews the movie *Saw*). Almost half of the zine is devoted to a reprint of *Constant Agitation* #5 (circa 1997), a photo zine documenting the punk scene in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti. Josh states that the goal in this reprint is to demonstrate to current punks what the community was like in the past. Although this

zine has a pretty well-defined audience—the punk scene in eastern Michigan—I think anyone interested in creating or strengthening their local community could learn a lot from this well-produced publication. Ladies and gentlemen, this is what a scene zine should look like. (AM)  
\$4, 807 N. Main St., Ann Arbor, MI 48104, [thisbadidea@yahoo.com](mailto:thisbadidea@yahoo.com)

### Blackpool Rox II

*Blackpool Rox II*, published by an English label, is a standard music zine featuring interviews, columns, reviews, and an article about copyrights in the music industry. The small type is difficult to read, and the bourbon isn't making it any easier. This issue features the Great St. Louis, the Weakerthans, Zounds, Holidays in the Sun, and Anarchy in Hollywood. (VC)  
2 pounds, *Blackpool Rox II*, PO Box 1025, Blackpool, FY3 0FA, [www.jsntgm.com](http://www.jsntgm.com)

### Conscious Defect #1

*Conscious Defect* opens with a group of broke vagabonds getting kicked off an Amtrak train in some resort town. After roaming around for a while, the friends resort to scams: dumpster diving for Rite Aid receipts and grabbing stuff from the shelves to “return,” getting a “replacement” coffee-chain latte by complaining about the whole milk when you specifically asked for soy, and straight up shoplifting from a grocery store. However, it's on his next trip with girlfriend Maryam in which our narrator, Spydr, pulls out all the stops. They start in San Francisco, where a unique policy provides a one-way bus ticket to vagrants trying to return home. After unfathomable hours on the worst Greyhound bus ever, they stop in Lawrence, Kansas, and spend time meeting up with old friends and running some more scams facilitated by a Kinko's worker, unwitting churches, and poorly trained fast-food employees. They have to skip town after getting caught exploring the university steam tunnels, and thus head to St. Louis. After touring the devastating effects of gentrification, they hook up with some more friends and run still more scams. According to *Conscious Defect*, free stuff from local stores are all for the taking, as long as you know what you're doing. The story peters out in central Illinois, but the gist is that Spydr and Maryam find love amid vagrancy, thievery, and old friends. I personally don't believe that stealing is the best weapon against the monolith of modern capitalism—it carries a lot of social collateral that makes those who don't already agree with you less likely to listen to your opinions—but if sticking it to the Man sounds romantic to you, give this zine a shot. (AM)  
[No price given], [consciousdefect@inbox.com](mailto:consciousdefect@inbox.com)

### Down With the Driver #1. #2



**This issue's Reviewers: Abbie J. Amadio (AJA), Ari Charney (AC), Vincent Chung (VC), Andrew Mall (AM), Brian Moss (BM) Edited by Laura Pearson**



# ZINES

present DIY craft. (AJA)

\$4 (US), \$4.50 (Canada), \$4.70 (Mexico), [www.vidaliaparklivejournal.com](http://www.vidaliaparklivejournal.com), [msfilms@hotmail.com](mailto:msfilms@hotmail.com)

## Scribble Faster #2: The Mix Tape

This zine is structured like a mixtape of stories about boys and mixtapes. At times, it's a loose narrative on past relationships, and other times it's an anecdote about the nature of the mixtape. They dovetail nicely. Before the advent of the CD-R, the mixtape was a particular art that folks took ridiculously seriously. There were rules about what constitutes a good opener, how to follow up a fade out, and what to do with those last remaining seconds before the tape runs out. It was certainly prevalent in the mid-90s indie-emo scene, where mixtapes acted as social currency. Megan's a crafted artisan in the mixtape, expounding on the dos and don'ts with seasoned authority. Otherwise, *Scribble Faster* is stereotypical melodramatic indie rock woes. It's crush after crush after infatuation after crush, but none develop into anything substantial. Boys seem more like props than characters—a revolving door of nameless subcultural nobodies. This rehashing of romance not only proves tiresome, but it also breaks the mixtape rule that if someone puts more than five of the same genre on one side, none of the songs will be memorable for the listener. (VC)

\$2 or trade, Megan Gerrity, 955 Metropolitan Ave. #3R, Brooklyn, NY 11211, [scribblefaster@yahoo.com](mailto:scribblefaster@yahoo.com), [www.microcosmpublishing.com](http://www.microcosmpublishing.com)

## Scribble Faster #3

Rather than focus on short anecdotes on boys and music (see review of #2), Megan concentrates on a broader—and wiser—theme of "escape." By that, I mean what many of us restless youth were in our twenties: consistently transient, annoyingly fickle, and suffering existential fears when any kind of routine set in. Most of the stories revolve around her life in New York City—finding her niche and self-destructing when boredom strikes. All the while, she drinks with her friends and goes to indie rock dance nights. It's a personal zine that's a bit too introspective for my tastes: there's an overabundant use of the word "I" and a narrative frustratingly stuck in mundane events—not that the latter is our protagonist's fault, as she feels our claustrophobia as well. Unlike #2, the boy stories work in this issue, as they are fleshed out and given presence, which is important, as readers can feel the void when they depart. The stories do get better and that leaves me hope that Megan's learning how to create tales out of her life rather than merely documenting her experiences. (VC)

\$2 or trade, Megan Gerrity, 955 Metropolitan Ave. #3R, Brooklyn, NY 11211, [scribblefaster@yahoo.com](mailto:scribblefaster@yahoo.com), [www.microcosmpublishing.com](http://www.microcosmpublishing.com)

## Signal to Noise #42 - Summer 2006

This glossy music rag explores and exposes improvised and experimental music. Features in this issue include Atlanta's Table of the Elements records, Glenn Kotche (primarily known as Wilco's drummer, but a fine performer of improvised music in his own right), trombonist Joe Fiedler, and jazz composer Maria Schneider. Pages of concert, book, and CD reviews round out this quarterly magazine. (AM)

\$4.95, 1128 Waverly, Houston, TX 77008, [operations@signaltonoise.com](mailto:operations@signaltonoise.com), [www.signaltonoise.com](http://www.signaltonoise.com)

## Smudge

The poetry of Dusty Rose, as put together in *Smudge*, doesn't particularly stand out from the thousands of pages—filling notebooks and journals, stacked in closets and cluttering cyberspace—by other aspiring writers of this sort. Her poems read more like music lyric—snippets of feelings internalized and made to sound tough, desperate, or antagonistic. Unfortunately, it just isn't enough to relate your own pathos. (AJA)

[No price given], [www.myspace.com/dustyroze3](http://www.myspace.com/dustyroze3)

## Sugar Needle #30

This brief zine is among the most charming that I've encountered, and that's in no small part due to its focus: candy and sweets. It's sort of like a less academic *Beer Frame* in that it reviews various candies and packaging but doesn't take itself so seriously. For instance, one review of Garfield's Chocobites wonders, "If Garfield has Chocobites, what does Odie have?" Their review of Gummy Bacon (yes, it may have streaks of fat like the real thing, but it turns out to be strawberry-flavored) will hopefully encourage a recurring feature on "meat-inspired candies." My favorite find from the candy testers of *Sugar Needle* is the Pollo Asado lollipop, which is made of caramel shaped like a roast chicken and dipped in hot chili, but is sadly not chicken-flavored. (AC)

\$2 or trade, Corina Fastwolf, PO Box 66835, Portland, OR 97290

## Verbicide #17

*Verbicide* is an entertaining and polished glossy magazine that nevertheless maintains a solid reserve of punk attitude. Indeed, one of the four fiction pieces in this particular issue features the provocative title "Jerking Off to Agnostic Front," wherein a young gay punker has an unlikely fantasy, among other ruminations, about a tour van liaison with Agnostic Front singer Roger Miret. The centerpiece of this issue, though, is the extensive interview with porn star Tera Patrick and her rocker husband, Biohazard's Evan Seinfeld. They discuss the unusual dynamic of their relationship, and, of course, the business of managing the Tera Patrick brand. In addition to interviews with Mary Timony and NOFX, a typically freewheeling interview with Henry Rollins rounds out the issue. Rollins discusses the myriad projects in which he's been involved, which recently included voiceover work for a video game rendering of himself in *Def Jam Vendetta II*. According to the interviewer, we find Rollins' character issuing beatdowns to well-known hip-hopppers. And in case you're wondering, Rollins cheerfully admits that he was paid about \$10,000 for 90 minutes of work on this video game. (AC)

\$3.95, [www.sdisorpress.com](http://www.sdisorpress.com)

## The Vets Gazette, #3

*The Vets Gazette* is filled with articles taken from larger, mainly military-related publications, primarily the *Army Times*. The publisher assembles articles that aren't usually covered by the mainstream press; many of the articles focus on the aftereffects of war, and, most specifically, soldiers suffering from post-

traumatic stress disorder, which is an issue largely ignored by major media outlets. *The Vets Gazette* also makes more visible the parallel between the Vietnam War and the war in Iraq. It closes with an excerpt from *At Hell's Gate*, a novel written by Claude Anshin Thomas recounting his Vietnam War experience. The parallels may be blurry in the eyes of conservatives and liberals alike, but the veterans who have fought (and are fighting) the current war are going through the same horrific experiences those did in Vietnam. *The Vets Gazette* is a reminder that we still have lessons to be learned, that we shouldn't forget our history, and that our mainstream media has been turning its back on the realities, the tragedies, and the price of war. Those aware of this have to look elsewhere to get the truth. (AJA)

[No price given], Bill Price, PO Box 7001, Atascadero, CA 93423-7001

## Weiner Society #8

Although there's not much information available on the wordsmith behind *Weiner Society*—one Mr. Neil Edgar—I can tell you this: He's in a prison somewhere in California and, by the sound of things, has been in and out of incarceration for a good portion of his life. He has an extensive knowledge of, and adoration for, metal and punk music. And most of all, he's an incredibly gifted and thoughtful writer. Serving mainly as a memoir of the author's life and times, issue #8 of *Weiner Society* follows Neil through his turbulent youth—filled with sex, drugs, rock 'n' roll, and violence—into his time as a prisoner, which consists of more of the same. All spun seamlessly with eloquent introspection, Neil's autobiographical tales of gang-bangers, prison system perils, queer love, punk rock, addiction, disease, and the quest for happiness and spiritual fulfillment in the harshest of places combine to create what is perhaps one of the strongest contemporary accounts of criminalized counterculture and the American dream gone awry. (BM)

[No price given], Neil Edgar, *Weiner Society* c/o Fanorama, 109 Arnold Ave., Cranston, RI 02905 [www.freewebs.com/fanorama/](http://www.freewebs.com/fanorama/)

## Zine World #23

Finally! The new issue of *Zine World* has been almost an entire year in coming (there have been two review supplements since issue #22). For the uninitiated, the bulk of *Zine World* consists of reviews, including that of zines (they review every zine they receive) and other small-press publications—magazines, books, DVDs, whatever you have. These reviews are known for being critical and sometimes caustic; hence, the letters section is a humorous collection of responses from zinesters who feel like they got the short end of the staff. Also included are news items of interest to zinesters and zine readers, address changes, free classifieds, and more. *Zine World* is a truly valuable—if infrequent—resource to the zine community and the underground at large. Ignore it at your own peril. (AM)

\$3 (US), \$4 (Canada), \$5 (elsewhere), Jerianne, PO Box 330156, Murfreesboro TN 37133, [www.undergroundpress.org](http://www.undergroundpress.org)



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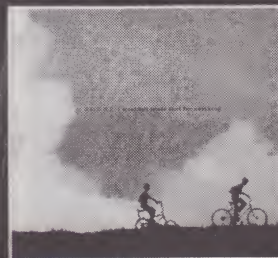
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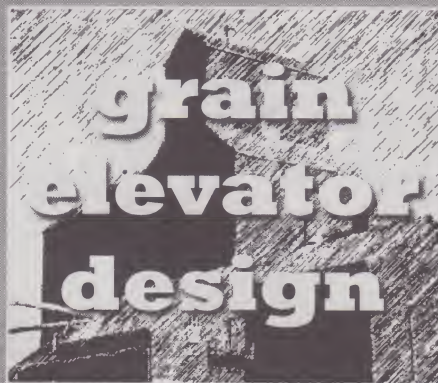
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# THE FIX

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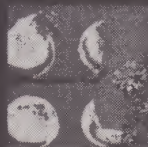
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### Frida Berrigan

Join the nonviolent, online community at [www.jonahhouse.org](http://www.jonahhouse.org), where you can read some of Berrigan's powerful and thoughtful writings about war resistance.

Check out the World Policy Institute's Arms Trade Resource Center where she is a Senior Research Associate at [www.worldpolicy.org/projects/arms/index.html](http://www.worldpolicy.org/projects/arms/index.html) and the War Resisters League, online at [www.warresisters.org](http://www.warresisters.org) or in the actual world at: 339 Lafayette Street, New York, NY 10012.

### Dash Shaw

The cartoonist has his own website—[www.dashshaw.com](http://www.dashshaw.com)—but you can order his new book *The Mother's Mouth* from:

Alternative Comics  
503 NW 37th Avenue  
Gainesville, FL 32609-2204

### Jeremy Enigk

Visiting the gorgeous but strange Lewis Hollow Recordings website at [www.lewishollow.com](http://www.lewishollow.com) may raise more questions than it answers, but you can order Enigk's latest solo project, *World Waits*, there.

### Freedom Archives

Visit the dusty shelves of long-unheard history at The Freedom Archives  
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Or just call them up and tell them they're doing a great job: (415) 863-9977.

Make sure to check out the Vinyl Project and their other amazing releases, available from AK Press ([www.akpress.org](http://www.akpress.org)) or Alternative Tentacles ([www.alternativetentacles.com](http://www.alternativetentacles.com)).

### Tara Jane O'Neil

Tara Jane O'Neil's latest CD is *In Circles*, out now from Quarterstick Records, PO Box 25342, Chicago, IL 60625. (Or toll-free mailorder US Only: 1-800-3-TOUCHU.) Her own website is at [www.tarajaneoneil.com](http://www.tarajaneoneil.com), and there you can find formation about previous releases, art projects, and all the other amazing stuff she does.

## articles this issue:

### Dirty Talk

If you haven't ever cum across her work (get it?), Annie Sprinkle offers a really great entry-way into sex-worker activism. Check out her website at [www.anniesprinkle.org](http://www.anniesprinkle.org).

Find out more about the documentary *Live Nude Girls Unite*, which tracks the Lust Lady employees' decision to join the Service Employees International Union, at [www.livenudegirls unite.com](http://www.livenudegirls unite.com).

For the more advanced practitioner of sex-worker activism, check out one of Mistress Minax's classes (or maybe just her website) at [www.mistressminax.com](http://www.mistressminax.com).

### Factories Behind Bars

Follow up on the work of Van Jones at the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights at: [ellabakercenter.org](http://ellabakercenter.org). There you can sign up for email alerts, find out how to volunteer, or just donate money.

### Off With Their Heads

Although it's a bit out of date, (a new website is said to be coming in 2004!) Street Rec and several related projects have an online presence at: [counterproductiveindustries.com](http://counterproductiveindustries.com). You may even be able to order the *Retooling Dissent* video at [info@counterproductiveindustries.com](mailto:info@counterproductiveindustries.com). Try it!



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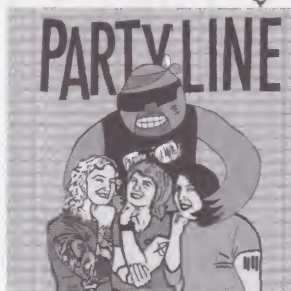


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**THE SHINS**

Winning The Night Away

To play music for a long time, you have to surprise the people that love you—while also surprising yourself. *Winning the Night Away* is the Shins' third full-length album. It's also the sound of a band growing up and out.

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**BOREDOMS**  
Super Roots

Six Boredoms SUPER ROOTS titles from the '90s, all but one available in the US for the first time. Follow as the band evolves from hyperactive avant-noise to tranced-out percussive bliss...



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### SHOOK ONES

*Facetious Folly Feat*

REV142: CD/LP

Out Now! on Revelation Records  
Seattle's newest residents and Bellingham's favorite sons, **SHOOK ONES**, have allowed their sound to branch out into dynamic and new territory. Their poppiness exudes on *Facetious Folly Feat*, charging through these eleven new songs with ease and aggression.



### LION OF JUDAH

*Universal Peace*

YB24: CD/LP

Out Now! on Youngblood Records  
The debut full-length from D.C.'s **LION OF JUDAH**. Progressive, powerful hardcore. Recorded and produced by the legendary Don Zientara at Inner Ear Studios.

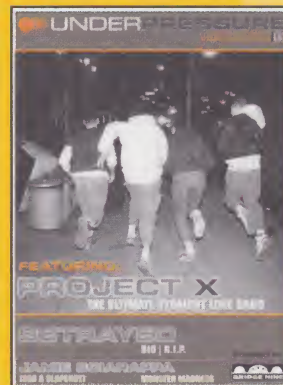


### V/A

*Brats On The Beat: Ramones for Kids*

GK129: CD

Out Now! on Go-kart Records  
THE RAMONES' timeless classics have been "kidified" by the GABBA GABBA HEY SINGERS. Each song features kids singing all the choruses and background parts. Guest lead vocalists include: Jack Grisham (TSOL), John Feldman (GOLDFINGER), Blag Dahlia (THE DWARVES), Nick Oliveri (QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE), Keith Morris (CIRCLE JERKS, BLACK FLAG) and Josie Cotton (80's hit "Johnny Are You Queer Boy").

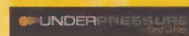


### V/A

*Under Pressure Video Series 01*

UND01: DVD

Out Now! on Under Pressure  
*Under Pressure Video Series 01*, Presented by Bridge Nine Records. The premiere issue of this hardcore documentary video series features: BETRAYED: Bio/R.I.P., Jamie Sciarappa: Monster Madness, and PROJECT X: The Ultimate Straight Edge Band. Produced, directed and edited by Anthony "Wrench" Moreschi of TEN-YARD FIGHT. See interviews, footage, photographs and video bios featuring members of TERROR, CHAMPION, CARRY ON, CIV, GORILLA BISCUITS, YOUTH OF TODAY, SIDE BY SIDE, SHELTER, JUDGE, SLAP-SHOT and SSD.







**CORE, PUNK, AND INDIE RELEASES**

**ALL THE BEST INDEPENDENT RECORD STORES:**



V/A

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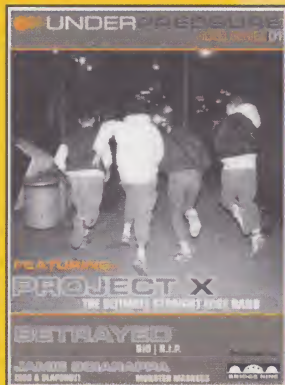
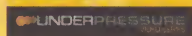
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# punk

Issue 77 | JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 2007 | \$4.95

**things I  
predicted  
George W  
Bush  
would do in  
2006 but  
thankfully  
didn't**

**Things Punk Rock Could (Re)  
Learn from the Open Source  
Software Movement**

**Zines found  
concerts I missed in**

**songs I listened to**

**non-stop that we**

**released in 2006**

**recipes I learned**

**invented in 2006**

**Trends I tried so hard to resist in 2006**

**LPs I bought this year that**

**Events, Web Sites I'm Obsessed With**

**People,**

**Places,**

**Records,**

**Books, and**

**Cultural**

**Landmarks and**

**Touchstones of**

**2006**

**live shows that**

**reinvigorated me**

**in the state of me**

**and people in go**

**Things I read**

**Stupid/disturbing/offensive Sex Pre**

**bands of 2006**

**that most people**

**will pretend they**

**never liked this**

**Sugar-Filled**

**time next year, if**

**they even admit to**

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